

C O L O R A D O P A R K S & W I L D L I F E

Strategic Plan Progress Report

FY 2020-2021



Letter from the Director

Dear Colleagues,
It's my privilege to take this opportunity to share the *2020-2021 Strategic Plan Progress Report*, and to highlight the tremendous amount of work you have achieved this year and your dedication not only to our agency's mission but to the natural resources of Colorado.

The outdoors and our state's amazing resources continue to be a respite, a focus of health and recreation and an inspiration to Coloradans and all who visit us. I want to thank you for the work you do to manage and conserve these resources, and your work to educate and inspire those who value Colorado's lands, waters and wildlife.

While working to put some of the challenges of 2020 behind us, we found ourselves faced with new goals, new legislation, and a new path forward for meeting and exceeding the operational goals set forth in the plan. I am proud of our past and current work and even more encouraged for the future, knowing that while some of the tactics and metrics of this plan change, your dedication never wavers.

In this past year, we revised dozens of herd management plans and used new technology to improve data collection in advancing our conservation efforts. We funded and implemented five new Regional Partnership programs and embraced two existing partnerships to advance efforts to equitably balance the needs for conservation and recreation in our state at a local level. State park lands were inventoried to catalog and preserve cultural resources, and that work is helping guide decisions on the master plan for Fishers Peak State Park. Using our Future State Parks Criteria, we were able to prioritize several properties that may well become our next State Parks. Despite some remaining pandemic restrictions and limitations, we continued important partnerships and programs that expand education and opportunities for young people to envision a career in natural resources, and maintained a strong and dedicated volunteer base. We worked tirelessly with local, state and federal partners to communicate the importance of the Leave No Trace Seven Principles and backcountry safety during a year of record public lands use.

Perhaps our largest goal was realized this year in the realm of sustainable funding for advancing our conservation mission. Our work with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Revenue, the Keep Colorado Wild Annual Pass bill was passed to create sustainable funding for parks, search and rescue operations, equity and inclusion programs and wildlife management, all while increasing access to all of our State Parks for all Coloradans.

These goals and plans are only able to be met and refined through the hard work, ingenuity, intelligence and determination of our staff and the help of our volunteers and partners. There's plenty of hard work ahead, but I can't imagine that work being placed in any more capable hands. Thank you for your service to the agency, the state of Colorado and to the natural resources that allow us to proudly keep Colorado such a wonderful place to live, work and play.



Regards,
Dan Prenzlou
Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Cover photo: Mule deer in the snow by Wayne D. Lewis/CPW

VISION

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is a national leader in wildlife management, conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

MISSION

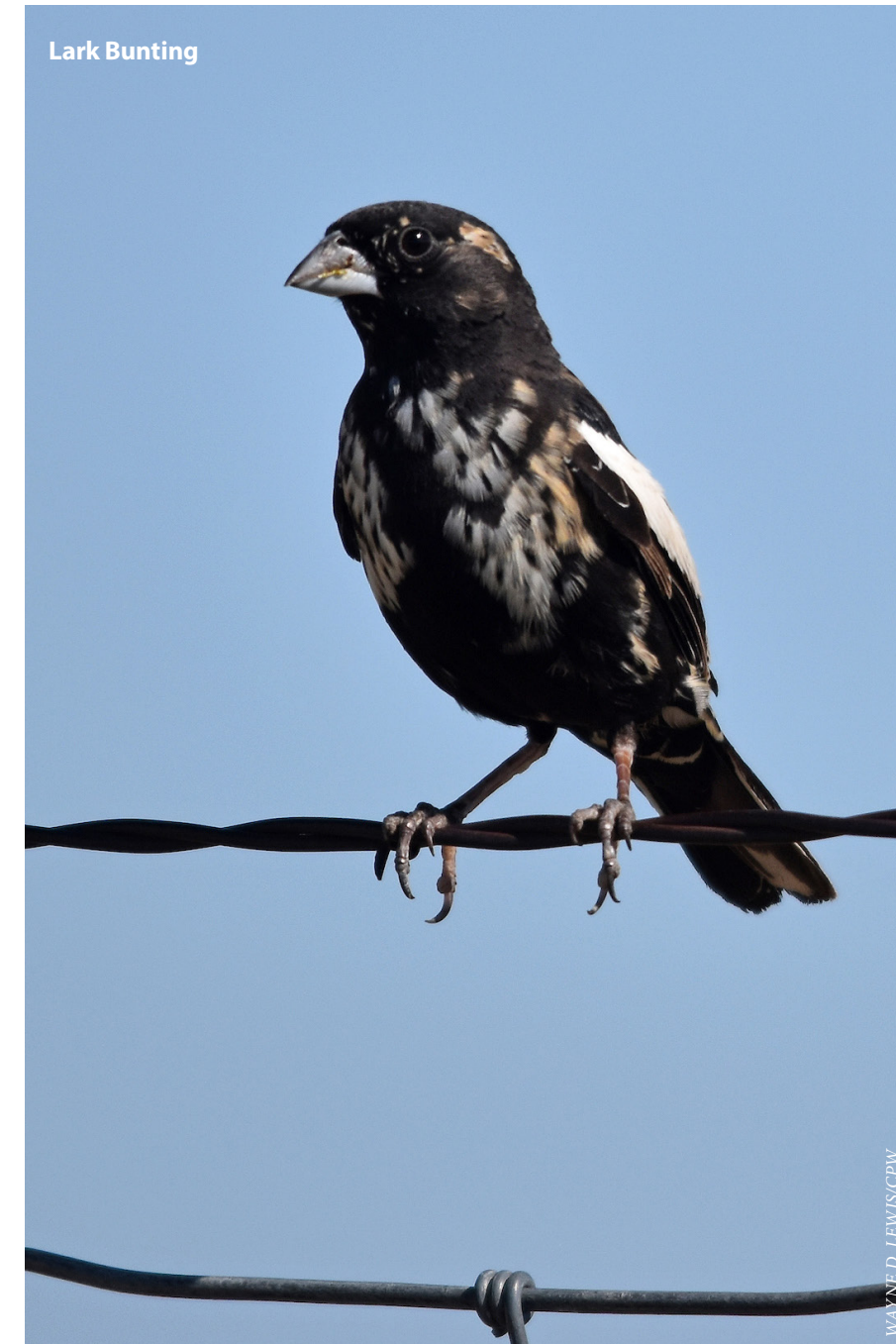
To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state park system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. (C.R.S. 33-9-101)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the dedicated Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff members who helped develop the Strategic Plan and are leading the implementation of the Operational Plans. We are grateful for their ongoing efforts to track and report the outcomes and impacts of our work.

We would also like to thank CPW's Public Information Unit for their writing and editing assistance, as well as CPW's Marketing Unit for their help designing the format of this report.

Finally, we would like to thank CPW's Leadership Team and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for their important feedback and support throughout the process of creating and implementing the Strategic Plan.



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Introduction

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan (Plan), finalized in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the agency's vision and mission through concrete goals and objectives. The public, stakeholders, partners, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, and CPW staff participated in shaping the vision of CPW and the development of the Plan.

The Plan's goals, objectives, and strategies are intended to be updated as needed. To implement the Plan, CPW develops two-year operational plans; operational plans are developed and reported on a fiscal year basis and reflect actionable sub-objectives and measurable metrics.

Operational Plan 1 was implemented for FY 2016-2017 and FY 2017-2018; Operational Plan 2 was implemented for FY 2018-2019 and FY 2019-2020; and the current plan, Operational Plan 3, which this report discusses, covers FY 2020-2021 and FY 2021-2022. This report provides a snapshot of CPW's work by highlighting our accomplishments on 62 sub-objectives during the first half of the two-year FY 20/21 – FY 21/22 Operational Plan 3 period.

The Plan identifies six goals that the agency will work towards in order to achieve CPW's mission and vision. The six Plan goals are:

1. Conserve wildlife habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems
2. Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation
3. Achieve and maintain financial sustainability
4. Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers
5. Increase awareness and trust for CPW
6. Connect people to Colorado's outdoors



Goal Achievements

Goal 1: Conserve wildlife and habitat

Manage sustainable populations of game and nongame species to support fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife-viewing opportunities

Protecting and perpetuating the wildlife resources of the state is at the core of CPW's mission. CPW strives to balance the biological capabilities of Colorado's big game herds, nongame species, and their habitats, and the public's demand for wildlife recreational opportunities, impacts to agriculture and social tolerance for wildlife. A primary tool used by CPW to reach this balance for big game species is the Herd Management Plan (HMP). Through a public process, long-term objectives are developed for how each distinct herd of big game species should be managed. Population and sex ratio objectives, which are set for a 10-year period of time, drive important decisions in the license setting process; specifically, how many animals need to be harvested to maintain or move toward the objectives. During the last year, CPW biologists updated 29 HMPs and reset their long-term objectives. With a schedule for ongoing completion of 16 HMPs per year, CPW will work to update at least 16 more HMPs in the second year of this Operational Plan period, which goes until June 30, 2022.

Herd management and license setting is informed by the annual collection of population and sex ratio data. Aerial inventory and classification of deer and elk herds also took place; however, pronghorn flights, which take place in August, were hindered in FY 21 by COVID-19 related restrictions. Pronghorn flights resumed to normal levels in summer 2021. In addition, CPW has been transitioning from the use of VHF radio collars to satellite/GPS collars in all five Intensive Mule Deer Monitoring Areas, improving data quality for annual assessments of deer survival and population modeling. The Operational Plan metric for this sub-objective is to increase the proportion of big game populations that fall within target management objective ranges by 5% each year. Not quite meeting the sub-objective metric, in FY 21, the proportion of deer populations that fell within target management objective ranges decreased by 2%; however, the proportion of elk populations that fell within target management objective ranges increased by 2% during the year. Proportional changes are not available for pronghorn due to the lack of inventory data. This objective is a work in progress and efforts to implement the changes needed to accomplish the metric will continue to be refined in the coming year.

Reducing and limiting the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is also essential to sustaining healthy herd populations. CWD is a fatal neurological disease found in deer, elk and moose in Colorado. Reducing CWD in ungulate herds ensures that wildlife populations persist through use of science, habitat preservation, harvest, and other management tools. CWD management also informs HMPs and annual license quota setting, further supporting the reduction of CWD prevalence among big game populations over the next 10 years. CPW's efforts to reduce CWD will help to safeguard Colorado's deer, elk and moose herds for future generations.

Approved in 2018, the CWD Response Plan requires CWD testing across many areas of the state to generate reliable estimates of CWD prevalence in herd populations and implement management actions should the prevalence of CWD in adult male deer exceed 5% of the herd population. After four years of mandatory testing, all of Colorado's deer herds now have a current CWD prevalence estimate. Currently, 22 deer herds have CWD prevalence that exceeds the 5% management threshold set in the CWD Response Plan. Management actions are being prescribed in 27 deer herds to reduce or maintain CWD prevalence at low levels; this means that CPW biologists are actively managing CWD in half of Colorado's deer herds. Approaches to managing CWD are herd-specific and are in concert with the approved HMPs. CPW will first be able to assess whether recent management actions have impacted CWD prevalence when each herd is retested; mandatory testing is tentatively scheduled every 5 years for deer herds with high CWD prevalence.

As part of managing sustainable fish populations, CPW's aquatic biologists regularly evaluate and update the state's fishery management strategies. CPW conducts hundreds of surveys on lakes and streams each year. The collected data is used to track fish population trends, evaluate the effectiveness of management actions such as stocking and regulations, and establish realistic management goals for a given lake or stream. High

priority and brood waters such as Chatfield, Pueblo, Horsetooth, and the Gunnison River are surveyed annually while smaller, more remote, or lightly used lakes or streams may only be surveyed once every 5 to 10 years. Through the use of fishery management survey summaries, CPW communicates with anglers about the status of the fishery and management goals for specific waters. In FY 21, aquatic biologists statewide focused on surveying and updating water-specific sport fishery management summaries as conditions warranted. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions during the field season prevented some of the surveys, especially large water bodies that require large numbers of staff. Work on this sub-objective will continue into the second year of this operational plan period.

Preserve and enhance diverse habitat

Ensuring resilient wildlife populations and healthy ecosystems requires conservation and enhancement of priority habitat. One of the tools that CPW's Real Estate Section uses to conserve habitat is the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP). The CWHP is an annual incentive-based grant program that gives private landowners the opportunity to voluntarily protect vital wildlife habitat and provide wildlife-related recreational access to the public. The program accomplishes strategic wildlife conservation goals and public access goals using conservation easements, access easements, and in some circumstances, fee title purchases. In FY 21, CPW closed on seven CWHP projects, increasing total CWHP land by more than 12,660 acres. Through these partnerships, the CWHP has helped protect hundreds of thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitat while maintaining working lands and providing public access for wildlife-related recreational opportunities to Colorado residents and nonresidents alike.

CPW Terrestrial Section staff work to restore and improve priority habitat conditions across the state. In alignment with Executive Order 2019-011 for the conservation of Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors, Section staff worked with DNR in drafting a report that identifies policy, regulatory, and legislative opportunities to ensure the ongoing conservation of seasonal big game migration corridors and winter range. At the time of this writing, the draft report is undergoing review prior to finalization. Related, the Section is in the process of hiring a full-time position for the coordination of wildlife movements in Colorado. The position will enhance the Section's ability to deliver on the goals of the executive order and this operational plan sub-objective.

In order to gauge progress, staff uses a statewide habitat database to monitor habitat improvement and treatment efforts. During FY 21, the CPW Habitat Unit completed more than 20 projects directly improving 8,263 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat. These accomplishments exceed the established metric for the June 2020 to June 2021 reporting period of improving between 1,500-3,000 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat annually. The projects covered a variety of enhancement techniques from native sagebrush community restoration to timber removal and prescribed fire. Many of these restoration projects were completed in partnership with CPW's state, federal, and private partners. Throughout the 2021 wildland fire season the Habitat Unit has also provided planning and technical support for more than 20,000 acres of wildland fire restoration seeding on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management throughout the western slope of Colorado. Support included seed storage and mixing logistics through the CPW Delta Seed Warehouse.

Another tool used by CPW to preserve and enhance diverse habitat for big and small game is the Corners for Conservation (C4C) program. C4C is an initiative that restores grasslands in farmed dryland corners of center pivot irrigation systems and around playa wetlands, creating habitat for upland birds and forage for mule and whitetail deer. Falling short of the FY 21 metric of improving 800 acres of small game habitat per year through the C4C, about 590 acres were planted this spring as part of the initiative. The shortfall is solely due to the lack of available funds to accomplish more acres. Demand from private landowners to participate in program has outpaced available funding to complete new corner projects, which cost more than renewing existing corners. In FY 21, CPW turned down approximately 100 new corner projects, totaling more than 800 acres. Without an infusion of funds, program staff does not anticipate being able to accomplish a large number of new corners in the future. Funding depends largely on CPW's priorities in any given year and the

availability of internal and external grant opportunities.

CPW's Wetlands Program annually awards competitive grants to CPW staff and partners for projects that restore wetlands and riparian areas. These projects create new wetlands, improve the function and management efficiency of existing wetlands, remove non-native invasive vegetation and replace with native vegetation, manage invasive cattail growth in wetlands, restore riparian habitat impacted by mining, and reconnect incised creeks with their floodplains. Wetlands projects benefit state wildlife areas, state parks and species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan. In FY 21, 27 wetlands restoration projects were completed, improving 2,519 acres of wetland habitat, and far exceeding the goal of improving 1,000 acres annually.

During FY 21, CPW in collaboration with the Colorado Outdoor Partnerships (CO-OP), made considerable progress to advance a statewide effort focused on the conservation of natural resources while enhancing equitable and sustainable access to Colorado's outdoors. In alignment with the CO-OP's work to facilitate and encourage locally driven, collaborative solutions in response to increasing interest in the outdoors, the CO-OP was selected to hold a leadership role in the Regional Partnerships Initiative as established in the Governor's Executive Order B 2020 008, signed in October 2020. Through this statewide Initiative, local and regional collaboratives are forming across the state to seek solutions for conserving Colorado's natural resources while meeting the growing demand for outdoor recreation.

During FY 21, the CO-OP and CPW drafted guidance documents for the implementation of Regional Partnerships Initiative. Through CPW's partnership with GOCO, CPW secured \$640,000 for first-year funding to begin the Regional Partnerships program. CPW collaborated with the CO-OP's Outreach Committee

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE STATE-LEVEL VISION:

In 2050, Colorado's people and economy thrive because of our healthy lands, water, wildlife, working farms and ranches, and improved hunting, angling and outdoor recreation opportunities for all.



to develop Regional Partnership program promotional materials and a webpage with a sign up for email updates. Over 110 people signed-up in the first few weeks of the website going live. CPW staff presented to recreation industry interests and regional organizations, including numerous counties, the Pikes Peak region and Colorado Counties, Inc. Building on this groundwork, a state-level vision and guidelines to support regional partnerships dedicated to enhanced coordination in achieving sustainable outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources were crafted. Exceeding the goal of having three regional partnerships adopt the state-level vision and guidelines by June 30, 2021, the following five coalitions applied to join the Initiative under the Plan Development Category and agreed to the state-level vision and guidelines: Envision Recreation in Balance Partnership, Metro Denver Nature Alliance, Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Routt Recreation Roundtable and San Luis Valley Great Outdoors.

Manage and monitor species of greatest conservation (SGCN) need while working with partners to maintain viable populations

Collaboration with partners including federal and state agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations, is absolutely essential to conservation planning, monitoring, and management of CPW’s SGCN. During FY 21, CPW’s Conservation Coordinators worked along with partners to manage nongame species and habitat through efforts including research, population status monitoring and reintroduction, and habitat protection and restoration benefitting threatened and endangered species. These actions enable CPW to proactively gather information and implement conservation activities to prevent the need to list species in the future. A sample of the work performed in FY 21 includes:

- Completion of the Gunnison Sage-grouse Recovery Plan in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and other partners;
- Continued efforts, in coordination with CPW Wildlife Health and external partners, to mitigate sylvatic plague for black-footed ferrets, white-tailed prairie dogs, Gunnison prairie dogs and black-tailed prairie dogs;
- Coordinating with the USFWS to evaluate and avoid potential impacts of the development of Fishers



Peak State Park on New Mexico meadow jumping mice;

- Provided input to USFWS regarding the implications of implementing the Endangered Species Act (ESA) “threatened” listing of black rail on wetland management activities;
- Participated in Colorado Oil and Gas Commission rulemaking to address sensitive species conservation needs;
- Annual coordination meeting with USFWS Colorado Ecological Services Field Office to discuss species conservation needs;
- Engaged with many agencies and external partners on issues related to implementation of Proposition 114 and wolf reintroduction;
- Coordinated with the Bureau of Land Management on funding and management issues related to Gunnison and greater sage-grouse and pinyon jays;
- Provided information for multiple ESA-related processes, including species status assessments, recovery plans, and delisting input for multiple Plant Species of Greatest Conservation Need;
- Coordinated with other lesser-prairie chicken states and USFWS on the “threatened” listing proposal, final species status assessment, and other conservation issues; and
- Coordinated with multiple agencies on potential impacts of COVID-19 on bat populations including survey modifications, testing and rehabilitation protocols.

CPW’s goal is to participate in collaborative planning and partnership processes for 10 terrestrial SGCN over the two year operational plan period. The work outlined above demonstrates great progress toward meeting this goal.

Ongoing surveillance and investigation of population status, field data collection, aerial imagery classification, and ground-truthing for several priority SGCN are underway. The species impacted by these efforts



include the Canada lynx, western yellow billed cuckoo, black swift, American pika, black rail, pinyon jay, brown-capped rosy-finch, lesser prairie-chicken, black-footed ferrets, black-tailed prairie dogs, Gunnison prairie dogs, white-tailed prairie dogs and species that depend on prairie dog-influenced ecosystems.

In line with the operational plan metric to complete population monitoring and/or status assessments for 60 terrestrial SGCN per year, CPW implemented multi-species, long-term monitoring and management programs for 33 SGCN; single-species monitoring for seven SGCN; special species periodic surveys for four SGCN; targeted species status assessment surveys and research for three SGCN; and disease surveillance and management programs for 11 SGCN. By balancing species-specific needs with policy requirements and broad, habitat-based projects, CPW effectively manages all of Colorado's wildlife, whether at-risk or thriving.

Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations

Providing a reliable and adequate water supply helps ensure that high quality hunting, angling and water-based recreational opportunities continue in Colorado. In FY 21, CPW Water Section staff coordinated the filing of eight water court applications, exceeding the metric to file at least four applications during the year. These filings impact the following locations: Poudre Hatchery, Sylvan Lake State Park, Tomichi State Wildlife Area, James M. Robb State Park – Island Acres section, Cherry Creek State Park, Tamarack State Wildlife Area, and Rifle Falls State Fish Unit. More broadly, during the dry summer of 2020, the Water Section supported the regions in maintaining water in ponds at state parks including Staunton, Golden Gate Canyon, and Mueller. The Section consolidated several water rights accounting activities under one consultant, developed or supported multiple Substitute Water Supply Plans to maintain existing water levels and maxi-



mize use of water, and provided guidance to regional staff on a number of water resource management related issues, including a tool for tracking and forecasting Voluntary Flow Management Plan water use in the Upper Arkansas River.

A key part of maintaining healthy fisheries for current and future generations is keeping water in Colorado's rivers--this is known as instream flow protection. The establishment of minimum instream flow water right protections within Colorado's water law system is paramount to this work. During FY 21, the Water Section exceeded the metric to collect, evaluate, and analyze field data to support and formulate a minimum of ten instream flow recommendations for Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) consideration. Section staff collected, evaluated, and analyzed field data for 49 potential instream flow recommendations and led all necessary coordination with Regional and Aquatic staff for five instream flow appropriations and three instream flow acquisitions that were formally recommended to the CWCB in FY 21. In addition, during the reporting period, the Water Section participated in three hearings before the Water Quality Control Commission: the Statewide Temporary Modification Hearing, Statewide Impaired Waters Hearing, and the Statewide Standards Hearing.

Water Section staff continue to make progress on the development of a dashboard spreadsheet tool capable of coordinating management and maximizing use of CPW's statewide water resources. This past year, a test case was identified and analyzed to better understand potential site-specific needs. An initial inventory of region-level facilities and site-specific needs has been performed and will continue to be refined, including mapping of sites, data sources, and critical metrics for each water body. Over the next six months, a beta version of the spreadsheet tool will be created and will then be used on a trial basis beginning in January 2022. Feedback will be gathered from staff users and the spreadsheet will be refined, automated, and available for routine use by the end of the operational plan period in June 2022.

Also during FY 21, the Section worked with regional staff, Senior Aquatic Biologists, and the Algal Toxin Team to finalize the Algal Toxin Administrative Directive, which provides internal guidance to CPW staff on how to manage toxic algae. Once the Directive was approved, the Water Section assisted the regions with implementation by providing sample collection kits and signs, android phones to run the CyAN app for monitoring blooms, and recommending actions when samples are positive for toxins. The Water Section maintains a database of toxin results and photos, which is available to all CPW employees. In FY 21, 13 CPW waterbodies were tested 127 times, and all requests for support by waterbody managers were provided by the Water Section. Algal toxins were present in seven of those waterbodies, and five of those waterbodies had levels that exceeded CDPHE guidance values. Waterbody managers at these lakes were advised to post "Caution" or "Warning" signs, increase the frequency of sampling, and were offered additional supplies and sampling support until the bloom subsided.

Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions

To ensure conservation planning and implementation for wildlife resources and habitat is carried out in a scientifically sound and effective way, CPW's Research Scientists conduct rigorous applied research on priority management issues. During FY 21 CPW's research scientists conducted all planned CPW research activities on schedule, with annual reports completed for 14 aquatic, 5 mammal, and 11 avian research projects. In addition, 46 peer-reviewed scientific publications were published in press or accepted for publication during FY 21. For the first time in FY 21, researchers completed a "[2020-2021 Science Applications Highlights](#)" fact sheet that provides multiple examples of how research conducted during the past year in the Aquatic Research, Avian Research, Mammals Research, Wildlife Health, and Human Dimensions units were used in management programs and policy decisions across CPW. An updated fact sheet will be produced annually going forward. Through this resource, managers and policy makers can better understand and document how CPW research has contributed to management decisions.

In addition, CPW researchers work closely with managers to interpret, communicate, and implement research findings and research staff performance plans have individual performance objectives for communicating research results. Throughout the year, researchers extensively communicated about research activities and results with internal and external audiences at area/regional meetings and Commission meetings, and through press releases, meetings with partners and interest groups, presentations at professional meetings, fact sheets, videos/social media, CPW technical publications, and publications in international peer-reviewed publications. Despite restrictions on travel and in-person gatherings, researchers have effectively communicated on research activities and applications to management.

Also during FY 21, Aquatics Section staff completed an extensive [angler satisfaction survey](#) to gauge, among other topics, anglers' preferred methods or channels of communication. Angler survey results have been compiled and data has been summarized. Aquatic Senior Staff are now working to compare data with previous surveys to determine trends and angler preferences. Overall, the study found that angler participation in Colorado continues to be high, with a dedicated customer base consisting of both resident and non-resident anglers. Angler satisfaction also remains high and fishery management goals in Colorado align well with angler responses to questions on preferences. The results of the study will ultimately be used to inform and contribute to future fisheries management plans for Colorado. During the study, the use of virtual angler meetings resulted in good participation and staff are developing strategies to incorporate this type of engagement regularly in the future.

Goal 2: Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation

Manage facilities and outdoor recreation amenities within state parks to provide positive experiences for Coloradans and visitors

CPW owns and manages many physical assets throughout the state that require ongoing maintenance and care. CPW invests significant resources each year in the upkeep of state parks, wildlife areas, and outdoor amenities from campsites to beaches to picnic areas, wildlife viewing stations, and fish hatcheries. Planning for the future maintenance, repair, and replacement of these assets is imperative. During FY 19 and FY 20, CPW's Capital Development Section created a buildings and facilities inventory to determine existing asset conditions that allows the agency to prioritize maintenance needs and funding levels into the future. All buildings and components owned by CPW have been entered into the controlled maintenance asset tracking system, enabling CPW staff to report on the level of maintenance each facility needs statewide and communicate the costs associated with upkeep and replacement of assets. During FY 21 staff made refinements to the system using GIS to better align the information in the system with the assets on the ground. Staff were also trained on ArcGIS Online and other tools to ensure that the asset, utility, and structure inventories are accurate. Also this past year, the Capital Development Section completed the Statewide Capital Project selection process and are working to update the five-year plan for the next Capital selection process that starts in November each year.

Safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation at Colorado's state parks depends on healthy, well-maintained landscapes and proactive natural and cultural resource management. The ecological health of state parks becomes especially important as state park visitation surges and visitors increasingly focus on wildlife watching and nature-based recreation. CPW's Resource Stewardship Section is responsible for compiling and studying resource information on all Colorado state parks through surveys and data collection and the management of this information in a meaningful and accessible way. The Section also performs habitat mapping and habitat condition assessments. During FY 21, the Resource Stewardship Section completed 13 natural/cultural resource inventories and seven weed mappings, far exceeding the OP3 metric for this sub-objective which was to complete at least five weed surveys and at least four natural/cultural resource inventories on state parks each year. These inventories and surveys are conducted to catalogue bird species, reptiles and amphibians, and identify noxious weeds. Data gathered from these projects inform state park management and develop-

ment decisions that incorporate conservation actions for species of conservation interest and their habitats, as well as the development of a Resource Stewardship Plan for each state park.

Also as part of this sub-objective, Resource Stewardship staff are responsible for tracking the total park effort spent on natural resource stewardship actions by June 2022. An analysis of these efforts completed in FY 21 revealed the following:

- Park spending on noxious weed treatments in FY 21 was down 6% from average spending over the past 6 years.
- Park staff time on noxious weed treatments in FY 21 was down 17% from average staff time spent over the past 6 years.
- Park staff time on other natural resource management activities in FY 21 was down 4% from average staff time spent over the past 6 years.

These numbers may partially be explained by the impact of COVID, but as overall park operating budgets increase and staff are added to parks, program staff expect future analyses to show increases in these activities.

During FY 21, the Resource Stewardship Section continued to be highly involved in the Fishers Peak State Park planning processes. The Section worked with partners to create a robust foundation of natural resource information to support habitat and species conservation at the park. Additionally, the Section was engaged in cultural resource inventory work to frame paleontological surveys, geological surveys, and a geologic hazards assessment including fault lines, landslide areas, and rock fall areas for the property.

Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks

This past year, CPW launched a search for future state parks. The effort included an invitation to the public to nominate potential properties based on the Future State Parks Criteria (Criteria). Broadly, the Criteria consider opportunities for outstanding nature-based recreation, conservation of Colorado's special places,



contribution to a financially sustainable parks system, and meeting the evolving interests of Colorado’s growing population. To support the identification and selection effort, CPW created a [parks criteria story map](#) to visualize the Criteria across Colorado through a series of interactive maps. Using public and CPW regional staff input, CPW developed a list of priority properties around the state to consider for new state parks. These sites were reviewed according to the Criteria, with several locations demonstrating strong potential for providing outstanding nature-based recreation and conservation opportunities.

The 19,200-acre Fishers Peak property was purchased in February 2019 through a collaboration between the City of Trinidad, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, GOCO, and CPW. In April 2020, CPW acquired the land and, in collaboration with partners, began the process of developing Colorado’s newest state park. Throughout FY 21, several significant milestones were reached including identifying a vision for the property, the formal naming of Fishers Peak State Park on July 16, 2020, and the public opening of 250 acres of the park on October 30, 2020. The Parks and Wildlife Commission also approved hunting access at the park, which made it possible for five hunters to enjoy access to the property during the fall and winter 2020 hunting seasons.

The Fishers Peak State Park master planning process continues and is expected to conclude in early 2022. Ongoing planning activities include gathering on-site data on natural and cultural resources to inform recreation planning, and gathering extensive input from partners, stakeholders and the public through public meetings, surveys, and panels, interest groups and work groups, Tribal consultation, and the park’s website.

Market the special qualities of Colorado’s state parks

Colorado state parks represent one of the most successful park system models in the western United States. One of the ways CPW engages recreationists in exploring state parks and other CPW properties is by hosting events that draw visitors from across the nation and around the globe. CPW’s world-class shooting range and education center, Cameo, was on center-stage as the facility hosted more than 12 national and world-title shooting events and conferences in FY 21, bringing together hundreds of participants and spectators for each event. Post-conference surveys conducted for five of the largest events revealed a 98 percent satisfaction level



from competitors who took part in the associated events. Cameo staff are currently working to develop a CPW-specific survey that can be used for all events in 2021.

Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products

CPW invests significant resources in providing outstanding customer service and excellent facilities throughout its state parks. In line with this commitment, CPW is taking steps to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at state parks, including increasing accessibility of information and parks products. At the outset of the previous operational plan period, CPW intended to improve the way visitation is counted at state parks. Unfortunately, this metric was not fully completed during that operational plan period and work to meet this sub-objective continues in the current operational plan. During FY 21, procedural measures were put in place to enable timelier reporting of park visitation totals each month. Staff also explored potential routes for more accurate counting and reporting, but have not yet identified the ultimate solution at this time.

Additionally in FY 21, to better accommodate customers and make parks information and products more accessible, CPW implemented the following:

- Online renewals for OHV, snowmobile and boat registrations.
- Promotional emails are being sent to customers to remind them to renew their annual licenses and park passes one month prior to expiration; CPW is seeing increased renewals through this effort.
- Revamped all of the disability and income-eligible license and pass applications and webpages to make them more customer-friendly.

More improvements made in FY 21 through the use of technology are discussed in Goal 6.

Goal 3: Achieve and maintain financial sustainability

Identify potential new and broader sources of funding

CPW has been exploring ways to achieve and maintain financial sustainability by expanding the agency’s relevance to a broader audience and identifying new sources of revenue. In October 2018, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and CPW completed the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Future Funding Study. This study identified and evaluated potential new funding mechanisms for CPW, and also brought to light the need to expand CPW’s relevance with a larger group of non-consumptive users in gaining support for new funding mechanisms. During FY 20, CPW hired the marketing firm Cactus to conduct a relevancy study. The relevancy study established public attitudes towards CPW and identified messaging that is most likely to encourage people to take actions that support the agency’s work and mission.

Building on the funding and relevancy studies completed in FY 19 and FY 20, CPW and DNR worked throughout FY 21 to develop and build support for Senate Bill 21-249, legislation creating the Keep Colorado Wild Pass (Pass). The Pass was approved by the Colorado General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Polis on June 21, 2021. The Pass will be available, starting in 2023, to Coloradans when they register their vehicles and grant access to Colorado state parks. The pass price will be no more than one-half the current price of an annual state park pass. The convenience of purchasing a pass during vehicle registration/renewal and the lowered pass cost are anticipated to make Colorado’s state parks available to more Coloradans and thereby increase the relevancy of CPW.

Efforts to expand CPW’s retail program were also underway in FY 21. Over the last year, a Retail Program Committee was formed to develop a plan to move the program forward, increase revenue, and grow the number of stores and product offerings. The Committee developed mission and vision statements, a business plan with program goals, and fund management strategies. By moving the purchasing of retail products under a revolving fund, the program has been able to expand product selection across all retail outlets, and online. Gross sales revenue from the program in FY 21 exceeded \$1.5 million, far surpassing the \$1.0 million goal for this sub-objective.

CPW continues to work toward broadening funding streams within the donations, voluntary giving, and sponsorship arenas. In FY 21, CPW hired a temporary philanthropic development advisor whose primary goal is to develop a plan to help CPW create a robust philanthropy program that includes major gifts, planned giving, and crowdfunding and event fundraising opportunities. Great strides have been made towards increasing these funding routes and work has included the creation of a donor database that will help staff better manage, maintain, and communicate with current and future donors. CPW also continues to promote a variety of donation options including the addition of the round-up option on all sales kiosks and internet sales. Staff are working on a customer service representative training program for round-up donations at all offices. CPW continues to actively promote the opportunity to contribute to the “nongame and endangered wildlife cash fund,” which receives donations to CPW as a part of Colorado’s state income tax return. Known as the income tax checkoff, this program provides Coloradans an opportunity to make an investment in Colorado’s wildlife and habitats. CPW’s [“Check it off for Wildlife”](#) campaign actively promotes the opportunity throughout the tax season on CPW’s website home page and through other methods including social media, press releases, ENewsletters, the blog, the Colorado Outdoors magazine, as well as through outreach by partner organizations. Contributions from the income tax checkoff in FY 21 experienced a sizeable increase of about 47% over the amount received in FY 20.

Maintain existing sources of funding

CPW receives funding from myriad sources that include the sale of licenses and permits, fees, and grant funding. Many of CPW’s revenue sources are impacted by external factors, most notably weather, that cannot be changed through CPW intervention. As a result, it is important that CPW is able to recognize pending issues quickly and be responsive with operations. Strong budget and financial management practices support CPW’s ability to maintain and effectively manage current sources of funding.

During FY 21, Financial Services staff were charged with identifying CPW’s top sources of revenue and developing a method to measure the “health” of each source. Using revenue reports from the last five years, a review and analysis was performed to identify the top three revenue sources, to understand the variability of each source, and to make a determination regarding the level of detail to use in assessing the health of each source. Preliminary measures of health were developed for these revenue sources. Developing the health measures included determining the data being tracked, identifying ranges for “Green, Yellow, and Red” reporting, and outlining the process for analyzing the data. Next steps will include further review of both the revenue sources selected and ranges used to determine health. Once established, the quarterly analysis will be piloted and built into reporting. Alongside this work is the need to ensure that revenue from CPW’s various sources of funding is being received timely and fully. To that end, Financial Services staff conducted an audit of existing concessionaire contracts for Boyd Lake State Park, and compiled an audit report providing the findings and recommendations coming out of the audit. In the coming year, an additional audit will be completed to meet the sub-objective metric of evaluating two selected revenue streams by the end of FY 22.

Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly

CPW’s Financial Services staff are responsible for ensuring that reliable financial modeling is in place that informs Leadership and Commission decision making as well as equips staff to understand the financial implications of decisions and establish reasonable priorities. An accessible accounting of current revenue sources and an understanding of expenditure needs are critical aspects of managing budgetary demands.

The responsible use of financial and workforce resources in achieving CPW’s priorities contributes to the agency’s ability to achieve and maintain financial sustainability over time. One way that CPW documents the use of these resources is through the annual Future Generations Act Report. This report is made available to the legislature, Commission, staff and the public by November 1 of each year and details the steps CPW has taken during the prior year to effectively, efficiently, and responsibly manage resources and the exceptional

accomplishments of CPW’s dedicated workforce. CPW continues to make excellent progress on the goals outlined in the Future Generations Act and Policy & Planning Section staff has consistently reported on these goals since the first annual report was published in FY 19.

Additionally, Financial Services staff continues to reinforce the importance of informed decision making by the Parks and Wildlife Commission and agency personnel. Throughout the last year, CPW’s Assistant Director for Financial Services worked with the Commission’s Financial Sub-committee to assess the level of financial information that is most useful to the Commission. This process has resulted in improved reporting and communication and helped to inform the creation of materials to better educate staff about financial structures and costs associated with parks and wildlife operations. Over the coming year, these materials will be deployed to apprise staff and others of CPW’s financial position. These materials will likely be distributed through traditional channels such as email and statewide meetings, but alternative methods of communication will also be explored. Some of the materials that were developed in FY 21 include an introductory presentation on the budgeting and financial basics of the agency, refined cash fund reports, and a new legislative tracking process was implemented that included weekly email communications to staff throughout the legislative session. Continuing to hone these materials and communication efforts will lead to better allocation decisions, resulting in more efficient and effective use of resources.

Goal 4: Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers

Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel

Effective and consistent two-way communication is a key component for tapping into the knowledge and experience of CPW’s workforce. Not only does an informed staff help build connections and trust with CPW’s mission and direction, frequent communication also helps staff understand what decisions are being made and the path the agency is taking.

To better facilitate communication and provide a useful channel through which CPW staff can provide feedback, Organizational Development Section staff reviewed the employee engagement survey that was administered in 2018 to categorize survey responses and identify key areas of focus for the next employee engagement survey. Using the data gathered through the analysis, staff are in the process of developing questions for the



KEN PAPALEO/CPW

upcoming survey, which is expected to roll out in the fall of 2021. Results from the previous employee engagement survey were also analyzed for specific topics that will inform the development of training and mentorship programs.

Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce

CPW regularly looks for ways to improve efforts around the recruitment and development of a highly qualified and diverse workforce. During FY 21, CPW's Organizational Development Section continued refining the channels to identify and engage prospective employees. CPW's recruitment efforts during the past year were focused on expanding the agency's outreach and exploring different recruitment methods. As part of these efforts, the Section represented CPW at eight virtual career fairs targeting a variety of audiences including underrepresented students, veterans, and students in Park Ranger-specific programs.

CPW's partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) saw participation from over 280 young adults, who contributed 37 weeks of work at 17 state parks, 13 state wildlife areas (SWAs), and two state fish hatcheries. During FY 21, Participants spent more than 885 hours engaging in CPW career exploration and learning about the agency. For FY 22, CPW will again partner with CYCA awarding 48 weeks of work at 21 state parks, 16 SWAs, and two state fish hatcheries.

In its fourth year of partnership with CPW, Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), a program serving underserved, culturally diverse youth in Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver Counties, sent their Urban Rangers to work side-by-side with CPW staff, where they gained natural resource professional development experience by learning about park management and visitor engagement. The youth spent time at Barr Lake State Park and Golden Gate Canyon State Park and visited a fish hatchery. A Certified Interpretive Guide training helped the Urban Ranger crew learn how park staff design and create engaging environmental education pro-



Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) Urban Rangers at Golden Gate Canyon State Park

MIKE DELLIVENERI/CPW

grams. The Urban Rangers also worked with park resource technicians on projects demonstrating how CPW balances recreation and conservation. The youth had the opportunity to meet and network with professionals in various careers within CPW, an experience that deepened their understanding and appreciation for CPW and the possible career opportunities ahead of them.

Additionally, the Section continues to identify ways to broaden and diversify its paid internship programs as a means to recruit future employees. Modifications to the Youth Internship Program (YIP) are underway that will provide more pathways to employment within natural resource careers for young adults. CPW staff are currently exploring the possibility of a YIP pilot program with partner organizations including CYCA and Hispanic Access Foundation.

CPW has been working to approve a Career and Technology Education (CTE) certificate that will provide high school students with a better understanding of possible career options in natural resources and offer them a head start on developing the knowledge and skills needed for these careers. This certificate program is authorized through the Colorado Department of Education and it is CPW's goal to help build more robust programs with the Junior College system and college systems to further the agency's future recruitment goals. On September 16, 2020, CPW Director Dan Prenzlöw signed an endorsement letter for the Ducks Unlimited Ecology Conservation and Management Certification that can be used with high school CTE programming across the state. While the impact of COVID with local school districts led to slow progress on the planning stages of this initiative, school districts were able to reengage with CPW in the spring and positive momentum has been made with three school districts along the Front Range that are in the beginning stages of offering a natural resources pathway in their schools.

The CPW Recruitment and Retention Team reconvened in FY 21 and drafted an action plan with goals into FY 22 that focuses on job fairs, recruiting new staff through alternative pipelines, and the agency's efforts to retain staff once hired. During the past year, the team reviewed the DNR exit surveys and identified specific areas to look at in greater detail within CPW. The team is currently conducting a thorough review of applicant and hiring data for each job classification and will compile a report to inform ongoing recruitment practices. Phase two of the project will include reviewing employment retention in each job classification.

CPW takes seriously the importance of investing in professional development and training for its employees as a way to retain and develop the workforce. The Section works hard to make training and professional development available to all CPW staff members from investments in the Daniels Leadership Program in partnership with the University of Denver to staff in-service opportunities, the Section dedicates their time to ensuring CPW staff have the skillsets they need and want to succeed in their jobs. Unfortunately, the Daniels Leadership Program was cancelled during FY 21 due to COVID restrictions; however, the next cohort is scheduled to move forward with in-person training starting in the spring of 2022. In conjunction with the Daniels Leadership Program, CPW is developing a series of monthly programs specifically for past graduates to keep the learning and relationship moving forward. CPW intends to involve past graduates in helping to design and implement a mentorship program that will provide mentorship training and ideas for staff who are interested in stepping into a mentor roll as a resource for other staff. The goal with this mentorship program is to eventually have mentors in place for each job class represented, serving as a resource for all current and new employees.

Attract Inspired Volunteers committed to CPW's mission

A dedicated and diverse pool of both paid staff and unpaid volunteers is essential to achieving CPW's mission, and the talent, passion, and budget savings the agency receives from volunteer contributions is invaluable. Volunteerism also cultivates stewardship and builds stronger connections between CPW and local communities. CPW's volunteers are critical to achieving the agency's mission and serve in a variety of roles, such as camp hosting, education and outreach, community science, habitat and trail work, maintenance and construction, wildlife projects, customer service, and many more. During FY 21, CPW engaged 3,554 volun-

teers who contributed over 291,829 hours of time. This is an equivalent value of more than \$8.8 million, or the time of 140 full-time employees.

CPW's Volunteer Program provides recruitment, screening, training, retention, support and resources for state parks, wildlife areas, hatcheries, educational programs, and CPW administrative offices throughout Colorado. During FY 21, the Program held nine staff and/or supervisor trainings to share best practices and national trends in volunteer management, greatly exceeding the requirement for three trainings to be held during the year. One training offered by the Program was the Annual Education and Volunteer Training for CPW staff. While the training is typically held in-person, FY 21's training was offered virtually. The training engaged 90 attendees in at least one of the four sessions and saw wider representation from the different sections of the agency than the in-person training usually draws. This year's training theme was titled "Tips and Tricks for Meaningful Virtual Engagement."

Program staff also facilitated two "office hours" opportunities in FY 21 to provide informal learning opportunities to staff, centered on the theme of "solutions to challenging volunteer situations." The open forum allowed staff to share examples and brainstorm solutions together. In November 2020, the team co-facilitated a full day Volunteer and Partnerships training for 16 new park rangers and district wildlife managers. The morning included "101" strategies and resources, and guest speakers. In the afternoon, the group completed a volunteer service project at Barr Lake State Park so that trainees could see how a project might be organized and facilitated.

In June 2021, the team offered five trainings for staff on the new volunteer management database, CPW Connect. Since roll out, volunteer coordinators have provided daily support for staff and volunteers to ensure that they can access and use the volunteer database to track volunteer activity consistently and accurately. The new system will greatly enhance and streamline staff and volunteers' experiences, with tools such as an easy-to-use calendar search, shift scheduling that will automatically calculate a volunteer's hours, built-in communication, and a learning management system for online orientations, trainings, quizzes or videos. For potential advanced use, the system also offers the ability to track outcomes of volunteer activity, such as the number of bags of trash picked up or miles of trail built.

In the fall of 2020, the team conducted the annual volunteer survey. The response rate for the FY 21 survey



increased from 2019 by 29 percent, with 928 respondents weighing in about their volunteer experiences with CPW. The survey results indicated that:

- 90% of survey respondents are satisfied with their volunteer experience;
- 92% enjoy volunteering with Colorado Parks and Wildlife;
- 91% agree that their volunteer service is meaningful and makes a positive difference;
- 91% would recommend volunteering with CPW to a friend or family member;
- 58% of respondents have purchased a hunting or fishing license; and
- 41% have purchased a state park pass.

Feedback from the survey has informed how often staff should communicate with volunteers (monthly) and through what method (email). CPW Connect will increase communication and support from staff, and help volunteers better find opportunities suited to their interests (two of the areas identified by the survey as areas for improvement). A new annual staff survey was also implemented, drawing responses from 128 staff who work with volunteers.

In order to amplify the work of partner organizations, Volunteer Program staff began cultivating relationships with groups sharing CPW's focus on EDI, conservation, and community service. In FY 21, staff met with several groups including Outdoor Afro, Latino Outdoors, Groundwork Denver, and Backpackers. Program staff supported Outdoor Afro Colorado and Denver Audubon on a birding webinar in February 2021 to uplift birders of color and encourage participation in community science through the Great Backyard Bird Count. Staff also partnered with the Therapeutic Recreation Program to offer an Ability Awareness Training to CPW staff and increase awareness of how to work with people with disabilities. Staff continues to deepen and enhance existing relationships with partners like Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado in considering affinity spaces or offering ASL supported volunteer projects, and Friends of Colorado State Parks, to help local Friends groups fund and "friendraiser" for their associated state park. Included in these conversations are identifying strategies for equity and inclusion.

One metric not addressed during FY 21 was the goal of conducting a literature review and regional listening sessions to learn how cultural and community factors impact volunteer behavior. Due to COVID travel restrictions, work on this metric was put on hold; however, Volunteer Program staff have had several informal conversations and attended training webinars on the topic throughout the year. The deadline for this metric has been extended into FY 22.

Goal 5: Increase awareness and trust for CPW

Communicate information about CPW's mission, funding and key programs

A central way that CPW increases the public's awareness of the agency, as well as highlights CPW's relevance in the lives of Coloradans and visitors, is through the use of strategic internal and external communication. The development and implementation of salient, targeted communication strategies create brand consistency and recognition and reinforce connection with CPW's mission and work.

During FY 21, Marketing Section staff efforts were aimed at better understanding gaps and opportunities in the agency's ongoing communication and coverage approaches. Staff reviewed messaging and branding across various channels including video, social media, and print pieces. Bi-monthly reports, including campaign specific reports, dating back to 2019 are used to guide and shape future campaigns. In late 2020, the Section converted a staff position to focus specifically on managing digital communications, including media monitoring, and analyzing prior reports to establish a baseline and ensure continuity of efforts. Moving forward, Section staff will review reports on a weekly basis to observe trends and topics of high interest to media partners and the public.

Working with CPW's Branding and Communications Section, staff developed a full brand guidelines and messaging toolkit. The toolkit was presented to Regional and Park Managers in October 2021 with the intent to distribute the guidance agency-wide for live and virtual meetings before December 31, 2021. Section staff also developed a strategic communication rollout plan template to streamline campaign outreach using a variety of channels to target diverse audiences. Media and public engagement is monitored during campaigns to adjust messaging and to target additional audiences as needed. In December 2021, Section staff will review all media reporting for July 2020 - December 2021 to understand where coverage spiked and measure effectiveness of strategic plans to build planned media kits before June 2022.

CPW strives to be responsive and timely in all communications with both external and internal stakeholders. During FY 21, Licensing Section staff worked to assess and improve response times to IPAWS data requests that are received from inside and outside the agency. Staff started the process by baselining current response times and found that the baseline has consistently been around five days, or sometimes less for simpler data requests. To further expedite frequently requested data, staff developed PowerBI IPAWS reports that are easier to keep updated and accessible at any time by any State of Colorado employee. At present, PowerBI reports are available for application and sales trends, reservation occupancy, sales by channel/location, and reports on customer demographics. This sub-objective has been met and completed.

Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement

All Coloradans play an important role in the responsible use and conservation of the state's lands, waters and wildlife resources. Because of this, CPW strives to engage stakeholders from various interests in planning and decision making processes. CPW continues to build communication channels that deliver information to the public, as well as promote opportunities for the public to interact with the agency. The agency uses several tools including public comment forms, newsletters, educational outreach, town halls, virtual sessions/meetings as well as partner networks and social media, to enable two-way conversations with thousands of Coloradans and visitors alike. One key communication channel, CPW's website, will soon undergo an update. During FY 21, staff applied for grant funding for the project, developed an RFP, and audited the content on the existing website. The RFP was released in August 2021, with an expected vendor selection to take place in October 2021, ahead of schedule.

Finding effective ways to involve broader, more diverse audiences is crucial to CPW's mission and strategic goals. During FY 21, CPW accomplished a key metric for this sub-objective by adopting the Community Partnership Principles Guide, which was developed by the Colorado Equity Alliance. This Guide provides best practices to advance inclusive and equitable community engagement practices and foster participation from traditionally underrepresented populations in decision-making. CPW is now putting these Principles into practice with support from a DNR Community Partnership Working Group. The development of the Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan offers one example of the Principles in action. Since the Park's establishment, CPW, project consultants and partners have been engaging local communities to gather input on the planning process and master plan elements. Recognizing the unique government-to-government relationships with Tribes, CPW has met with Tribes individually to share park planning information and gather input.

Another key communication platform is CPW's annual Partners in the Outdoors Conference. Through the annual Partners in the Outdoors Conference, CPW facilitates a signature platform for organizations to collaborate around the shared vision of advancing and balancing outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado. During FY 21, the Conference continued its growth trajectory and achieved attendance that surpassed the goal of 620 people. Due to the pandemic, the Conference was again held virtually, enabling the conference to extend its reach to over 900 attendees. The Partners in the Outdoors Grant Program was also able to surpass the goal of providing \$100,000 in grants to partner organizations that are working to advance and balance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado. Due to cost savings realized by hosting a virtual

conference, the grant program was able to award nearly \$220,000 to 24 partner organizations.

Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management

The Colorado Wildlife Council (CWC) exists to educate the general public about the benefits of wildlife, wildlife management, and wildlife-related recreational opportunities in Colorado, while in turn, generating increased support for CPW's mission. By statute, the CWC is responsible for overseeing the design of a comprehensive media-based public information program to accomplish these objectives. Funding for CWC's work is generated through a \$1.50 surcharge on Colorado hunting and fishing licenses.

Building on the "This is the Wild Life" campaign work started in FY 20, the CWC continued to make use of billboards, broadcast TV, social media, and Spotify to reach its target audience. Because of the new spending authority granted to the CWC in FY 20, campaign dates were extended and primetime media placements were added in FY 21. Advertising agency, R&R Partners, adjusted campaign strategies due to changing target audience media consumption brought on by COVID. R&R Partners won the bid in FY 21 to continue as the advertising agency for the CWC.

The CWC also launched a pilot Outreach Team for the calendar year of 2020. Although COVID dampened anticipated audience activities, the team was able to "test" strategies through engagements at state parks, farmers markets, and radio and social media live interviews. These interactions provided CWC instant feedback on messaging. Data collected by the Outreach Team showed that face-to-face interactions are valuable and were successful in moving the target audience from "neutral" to "support" and from "don't support" to "neutral" on certain topics related to CPW's work. In addition, the interactions increased interest of the target audience



to engaging in hunting and fishing related activities. Because of the success of the pilot Outreach Team, the CWC approved an Outreach Team for the 2021 calendar year.

Goal 6: Connect people to Colorado's outdoors

Broaden the access and variety of recreation opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors

Colorado's growing population and increased interest in outdoor recreation continue to place heightened demand on CPW's land resources. Securing additional lands that are appropriate for public access and equipped to deliver world class outdoor recreation, while also inspiring healthy living and active stewardship, is an essential part of CPW's mission. Hunters, anglers and other outdoor recreationists have access to Colorado's lands through the Public Access Program (PAP). Not only does the PAP provide limited, seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities on Colorado trust land across the state, lands enrolled in the PAP are also open to a variety of wildlife-related uses. As announced in July 2019, CPW has been involved in a multi-year effort to double the size of the land enrolled in the PAP. In May 2021, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission unanimously approved the enrollment of an additional 69 state trust land properties, encompassing more than 199,300 acres, into the PAP for the fall 2021 hunting season, bringing the program to a total of 973,000 acres from 478,000 (in 2018). The enrollment of these additional lands in the PAP also accomplished DNR's WIG goal around increasing public access to outdoor recreation from 1.88 million acres to 2.08 million acres by June 30, 2021.

CPW operates nearly 700 miles of trails throughout the state, connecting residents and visitors to nature and providing safe access to recreational opportunities while protecting Colorado's resources. CPW's State Trails Program supports trail management, maintenance and improvement through a number of grant programs. The Program established an Operational Plan 3 sub-objective to increase available grant funds that go toward maintaining existing trails by ten percent before the end of the plan period in June 2022. During FY 21, grant application evaluations completed by Program staff placed additional emphasis on maintenance and repair projects for the both the Non-Motorized and OHV grant cycles to help address the resource impacts of increased visitation on Colorado's trails and public lands. Grant funds awarded in FY 21 totaled over \$9.0 million across 119 grants benefitting OHV, non-motorized, and winter use trails. With recent approval from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for more funding devoted toward non-motorized and OHV trail maintenance projects in FY 22, CPW is on track to surpass the sub-objective goal.

Also during FY 21, State Trails Program staff worked in coordination with land managers, a stakeholder advisory group, local and federal partners, and the public to update and publish the Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind handbook. The handbook was posted to CPW's website on June 30, 2021, meeting the operational plan deadline. Guidance from the document will be integrated into the trail planning efforts going forward.

Another way that CPW encourages Coloradans and visitors to experience the outdoors, while recreating responsibly, is by offering educational and interpretive programs and hands-on training for new and basic outdoor recreation skills. In FY 20, an activities database was under development to allow CPW field staff to consistently report data on program attendance to better gauge program quality and interest. During FY 21, Education Section staff worked with field staff and managers to streamline the reporting categories within the database. The database was launched in October 2020 and field staff were trained on how to use the new system. Due to COVID restrictions, public programs were limited for a significant portion of the fiscal year; however, with more programs being offered, the system is also receiving an increased number of reports. Additional communication with field staff to support efforts and improve reporting efforts is planned for FY 22, but it is unclear if the data collected during the Operational Plan 3 reporting period will be sufficient to establish a reliable baseline by June 2022.

Provide facilities, infrastructure and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences

CPW manages more than 1,400 facilities across Colorado, including 42 state parks encompassing almost 230,000 acres, 364 state wildlife areas, 19 fish hatcheries, 700 miles of trails, 117 dams, and over 4,000 campsites. Buildings, shooting ranges, dams, roads, trails and other constructed facilities provide opportunities for recreation, education and research.

CPW continues to make significant investments in capital construction and facility maintenance and improvements. Among CPW's highest infrastructure priorities is the management and repair of the 117 state-operated dam structures. During FY 21, the five-year planning process continued to refine the CPW dams in need of maintenance and repair and guided the Dam Safety Group in establishing next steps for completing the work. The planning process also established major dam construction projects for the next five fiscal years. The addition of new staff members in FY 21 helped accomplish these goals. In July 2021, funding became available to hire a consulting firm to update the dam Screening Level Risk Analysis (SLRA) for all high and significant hazard dams. The SLRA update will provide the critical information CPW's Engineers need to plan for risk based repairs and preventative maintenance. Also during FY 21, Capital Development staff finished updating the inspections for all CPW buildings and assets around the state. Inspections on critical and failing components were added to the controlled maintenance system and updated inspections related to the current cycle of capital requests were also updated. The controlled maintenance system is currently being updated to be more accessible and simpler to use. The system enables CPW staff to report on the level of maintenance each facility needs statewide and communicate the costs associated with upkeep and replacement of assets, leading to improved facilities for safe and enjoyable recreation.

Improving the production capabilities and efficiency of CPW's hatchery system leads to more sustainable wildlife resources and enhanced outdoor recreational experiences. Further, modernization and repair to



CPW's aging hatchery system, dating back over 100 years, is essential to its continued operation for the next 100+ years. In 2019, CPW began a multi-phase process to modernize the hatchery system. During FY 20, CPW completed Phase 1 of the hatchery modernization plan in which a consultant provided an analysis of the fish stocking program. Phase 2 of the modernization plan was completed in June 2021. This phase of the plan culminated in the delivery of a report comprising the consultant's comprehensive analysis of the CPW hatchery system and recommendations to improve efficiency in fish production. The results of the report will help Aquatics Section staff prioritize maintenance and capital projects at hatchery facilities into the future. During Phase 3 of the plan, which began in July 2021, the consultant will design modernization plans for CPW hatcheries and make recommendations about which hatcheries to modernize first. CPW expects to complete Phase 3 of the plan by June 2022.

In line with needed improvements to CPW's hatchery facilities, in FY 21, CPW completed the construction of a new hatchery building at the Las Animas Hatchery, replacing an 80-year-old undersized and outdated building. As a result of the project, anglers will directly benefit through increased fish production and subsequent increases in the number of Largemouth Bass and Channel Catfish stocked in Colorado's lakes and streams. CPW also began work on a capital construction project to repair or relocate a non-functional well at the Roaring Judy Hatchery. This project will increase the water supply to the hatchery allowing for an increase in catchable and sub-catchable Rainbow Trout production.

Another important aspect of supporting access to outdoor recreational opportunities is providing the technological infrastructure to make getting outside as convenient as possible. During FY 21, CPW Licensing Section staff exceeded the target of implementing one type of electronic pass and one type of electronic license for customers to purchase. As of July 2020, individual passes are available electronically for customers



Snowmobiling at Steamboat Lake State Park

VIK SCHEDEL/CPW

through their IPAWS sales system account. Annual fishing licenses were the first licenses available electronically in the myColorado app in April 2021, followed by small game and furbearer licenses in July 2021. Other license and pass types will be coming to the myColorado app in the near future. A new IPAWS app will also launch soon, to include all individual park passes and all non-carcass tag licenses. The new app will serve as a direct link to a customer's IPAWS account where products can be purchased and includes other helpful features. Other improvements made to the IPAWS interface during FY 21 include:

- Inventory hold for leftover day - the license purchasing system now holds the license in a customer's cart for 15 minutes to allow them time to purchase it.
- Enhancing queue-it for high volume sales days to improve customer's online experience.
- Fail-to-pay customers received 2-3 emails and a phone call to notify them of the necessary payment this year, compared to receiving just two emails last year.
- New reissue process for returned licenses, including a weekly preview list and set weekly release time. Previous years had a random release and no preview list.
- Ability to pay with a CPWShop gift certificate for all transactions, even drawn licenses and application fees.

This sub-objective also aims to improve registration renewal processes by decreasing the number of mail-in renewals for OHVs, boats, and snowmobiles by 50 percent, and instead directing customers to online renewals. In 2020, staff established a baseline of the number of registration renewals that are mailed in annually to gauge improvement towards the metric in FY 21 and FY 22. In FY 21 alone, significant progress was made towards the metric, including reducing mail-in renewals for snowmobiles by 48 percent, OHVs by 31 percent, and boats by 42 percent.

CPW's Business Operations Section is working to implement a plan for infrastructure upgrades and expansion that will improve bandwidth and the number of network-enabled CPW sites by 25 percent. Throughout FY 21, staff traveled the state making site visits to survey, identify and document aged infrastructure including cabling, IT closets, phone systems, and internet providers. Staff worked with the State Controller, OIT Controller, CPW Purchasing and the OIT Network Team to establish a new process that will allow CPW to engage third party vendors when a state internet provider is unavailable to provide service. As a result, CPW is well on the way to upgrading and improving infrastructure, technology and network connectivity at several CPW sites. During the year, staff upgraded or established new, improved internet service at fifteen CPW locations including CPW Headquarters, State Parks, Regional and Area offices, a health lab, and maintenance shops, using a variety of technologies. Staff also installed new phone systems at three state parks, replaced over 750 end-of-life CPW VOIP phones and associated infrastructure components, and upgraded network infrastructure, removed aged systems, and re-cabled fourteen CPW locations.

Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities

CPW's Partners Program is an outward-facing effort that brings together diverse interests from across the state, representing a large spectrum of the outdoor industry, in support of the agency's mission to manage wildlife, provide a quality state parks system, and inspire people to be active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. The Partners Program helps to foster alignment, awareness and trust among CPW and its many partners.

With a focus on building CPW as a model of equitable young professional development and retention among state and federal land management agencies, the Partners Program took steps to involve young professionals on the FY 21 Partners in the Outdoors Conference planning committee and as support for the conference. Through this annual conference, CPW facilitates a signature platform for organizations to collaborate around the shared vision of advancing and balancing outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado. In FY 21, the Program worked with a consultant to engage stakeholders and partners in CPW's youth leadership strategy. Unfortunately, setbacks as a result of COVID limitations impacted some of the work that was planned for this sub-objective in FY 21. Partner Program staff expect to involve additional young professionals on the FY

22 planning committee for the Conference.

Within CPW's Partners Program exists the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP). As discussed in Goal 1, the CO-OP is a collaboration of organizations representing the intersection of conservation and outdoor recreation and interests related to land, water, and wildlife in Colorado. Throughout FY 21, the CO-OP maintained strong participation at its quarterly meetings and added eight new members to expand and balance representation on the CO-OP. Surpassing the metric of having three coalitions join the Regional Partnerships Initiative, more than 20 coalitions applied to join the Initiative and seven were ultimately selected to participate and were awarded a total of \$610,000 to advance the effort. Two of the coalitions were selected under the Capacity Building category, NoCo PLACES 2050 and the Ouray Recreation and Conservation Alliance, and will be working to build out their coalitions with the goal of participating in the plan development phase of the Initiative in the future. The following five coalitions were selected under the Plan Development Category: Envision Recreation in Balance Partnership, Metro Denver Nature Alliance, Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Routt Recreation Roundtable and San Luis Valley Great Outdoors. Moving forward into FY 22, CPW and the CO-OP will continue to expand the Regional Partnerships Initiative and aim to announce a second round of funding to support additional coalitions that are working to advance the development of local and regional planning elements to inform a statewide conservation and recreation plan.

Promote the value of CPW's mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW's volunteer network and inspire stewardship

Engaging people in CPW's mission starts by letting them know what the agency has to offer. With the goal of fostering active stewardship while experiencing the outdoors, CPW refines its messaging and communication to resonate across various audiences, including those who may be experiencing Colorado's great outdoors for the very first time. As discussed in the narrative for Goal 5, efforts were underway in FY 21 to



analyze CPW's messaging and evaluate strategic approaches to broadening CPW's communication. In collaboration with the consulting firm Cactus, the next iteration of CPW's marketing campaign was developed and launched in June 2021. Building on prior work from Cactus as well as other branding efforts from within CPW, staff created a full branding and messaging guide to enhance how the agency is presented publically across all communication channels. Currently, Marketing Section staff is working to create state park specific campaigns and messaging in conjunction with the new Keep Colorado Wild Pass rollout. Through CPW's communication channels and those of partner organizations, the agency connects millions of people to CPW's mission, establishing CPW as a leader in the conservation and outdoor space.

Become familiar with the needs, interests and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation

The interests of outdoor recreationists, and recreational trends, activities, and opportunities are regularly in flux. As such, it is important that CPW understands the current demand for outdoor recreation in Colorado. With a goal of offering hands-on training that meets recreational demands and trends, CPW's Boating Safety Program offered a paddle event that included stand-up paddle boarding and kayaking for an event with Outdoor Afro at Chatfield State Park during the summer of 2020. Participants were provided with basic instruction and educated about the importance of wearing a personal floatation device (PFD). The Boating Program hosted a similar event at Barr Lake State Park in July 2021. At that event, participants received basic paddle instruction for canoes and kayaks, as well as the opportunity to receive angling instruction. Boating Program staff are currently working to create a program in partnership with Latino Outdoors in the future. CPW is continuing to work toward a more formalized hands-on paddle program for the public that can be taught by CPW personnel.

Throughout FY 21, progress on the sub-objective of collecting and establishing baseline measures of participant satisfaction, implementing measures to improve participant satisfaction, and measuring and reporting outcomes was stymied by staffing changes and health restrictions resulting from COVID. The Education Section expects to make headway on these activities in FY 22.



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