

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 2021-2022



## Letter from the Director

It's my privilege to take this opportunity to share the 2021-2022 Strategic Plan Progress Report, and to highlight the tremendous amount of work you have accomplished over the past year. Thank you for your dedication to the agency's mission, the work you do to manage and conserve Colorado's natural resources, and your work to educate and inspire those who value Colorado's lands, waters and wildlife.

We are excited to realize a major milestone in obtaining sustainable funding for advancing our conservation mission. The Keep Colorado Wild Pass will launch in January 2023 and 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.

We are taking steps to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at state parks using the latest technology. Progress towards this goal will continue as CPW implements the Keep Colorado Wild Pass in 2023.

We continued to explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks. Our work continues to expand opportunities at Fishers Peak State Park outside of Trinidad. The Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan is currently under final review and once approved, will help CPW strike the appropriate design and management balance that supports protection, preservation, conservation and outdoor recreation.

Several policy, regulatory and legislative opportunities this year will help us ensure the conservation of big game habitat and migration corridors. We achieved a two-year goal of updating 32 herd management plans and used new technology to improve data collection in advancing our conservation efforts.

We took lessons from our 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. We put these Principles into practice by incorporating them into the processes for the Fishers Peak Master Plan, the Wolf Restoration and Management Plan, and the design and development of the Outdoor Equity Fund.

We funded and implemented 10 Regional Partnership programs to advance efforts to equitably balance the need for conservation and recreation in our state at a local level. Combined these partnerships cover almost half the State and 27 counties. GOCO and CPW will offer additional grant opportunities to support this effort in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023.

We engaged new recreationists at CPW's world-class shooting range and education center, Cameo. The center hosted more than 12 national and world-title shooting events and conferences in 2021 and 16 major state, regional, national and world championship events in 2022, bringing together hundreds of participants and spectators from across the US and several foreign countries for each event.

We are very excited to manage the Colorado Clays Shooting Park as the Colorado Clays State Recreation Area. Located just 30 minutes northeast of Denver and near Barr Lake State Park, Colorado Clays Shooting Park offers both recreational and competitive shooters the region's widest variety of clay target shooting, including sporting clays, skeet and trap, as well as both rifle and pistol shooting. In 2021, Colorado Clays hosted over 30,000 visitors and threw over four million clay targets.

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.

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. 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.

Sincerely,



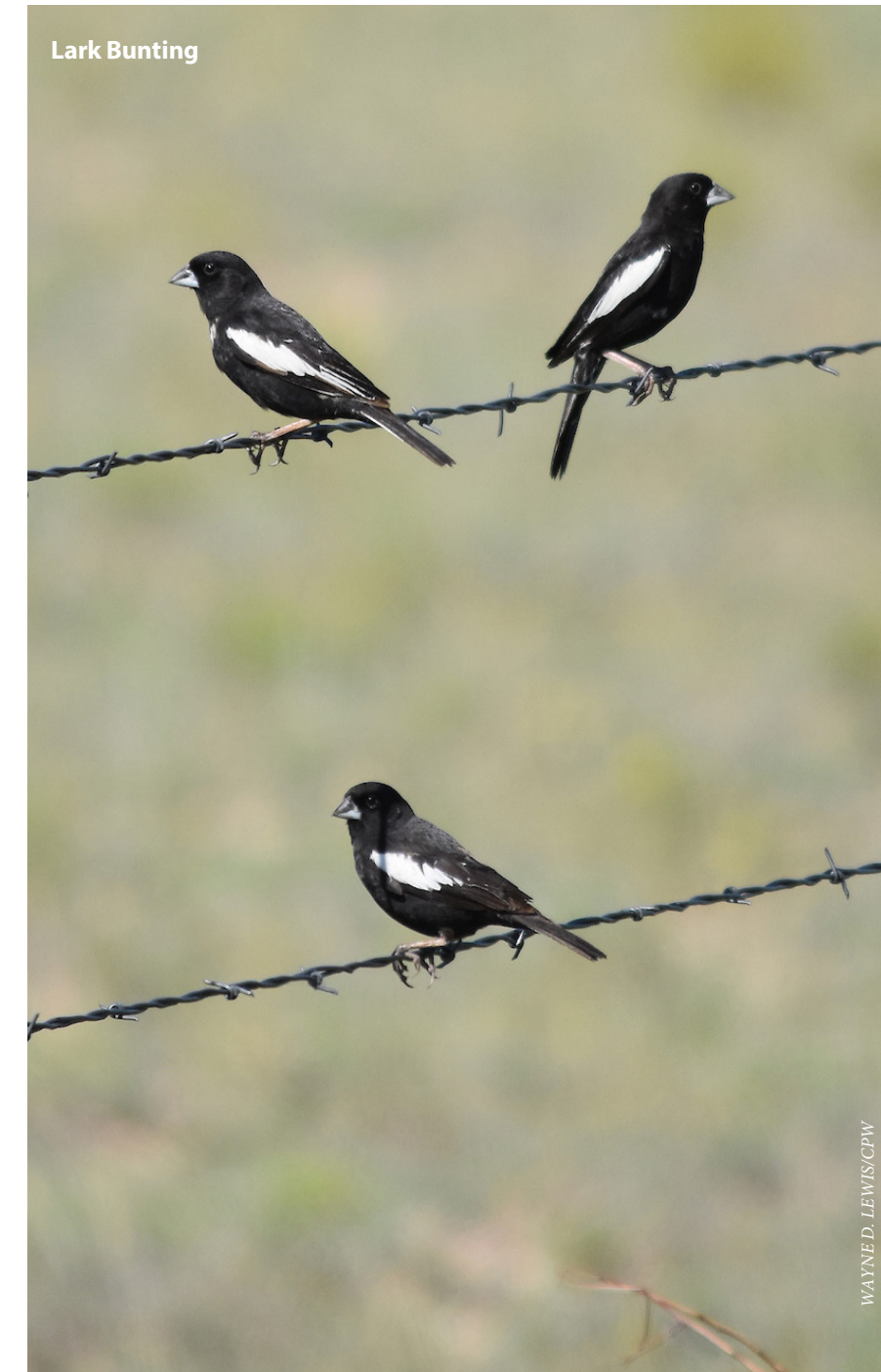
CPW Acting Director Heather Disney Dugan

## 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.



### 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)

### CPW Commission

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### CPW Leadership Team

Heather Disney Dugan, Acting Director  
Dan Prenzlów, Director  
Travis Black, Northwest Region Manager  
Cory Chick, Southwest Region Manager  
Reid DeWalt, Assistant Director for Aquatic, Terrestrial and Natural Resources  
Mark Leslie, Northeast Region Manager  
Mitch Martin, Acting Southeast Region Manager  
Ty Petersburg, Acting Assistant Director for Field Services  
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Cover photo: Rocky Mountain Bighorn sheep ram by Wayne D. Lewis/CPW



# 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.

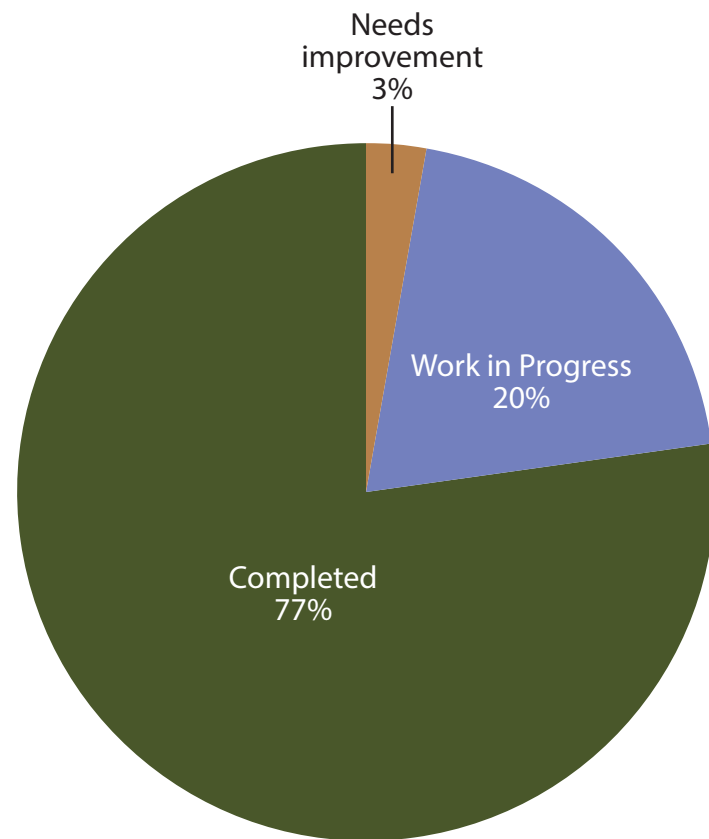
The Plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies are intended to be updated as needed. To implement the Plan, CPW develops two-year operational plans; operational plans are developed and reported on a fiscal year basis and reflect actionable sub-objectives and measurable metrics.

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 achievements related to 61 sub-objectives over 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

At the end of the FY 20/21 - FY 21/22 Operational Plan 3 reporting period, CPW staff completed 77% of the sub-objectives, another 20% are a “work in progress,” and only 3% need improvement (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Status of progress on sub-objectives at the end of the Operational Plan 3 reporting period.**

# 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 managing the wildlife resources of the state is at the core of CPW’s mission. CPW strives to balance the biological capabilities of Colorado’s terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and their habitats, along with 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. Over the past two years, CPW biologists revised a total of 36 HMPs; this includes completing updates of 29 HMPs in FY 21 and 7 HMPs in FY 22. While the completion rate for FY 22 did not reach the ongoing goal of completing 16 HMPs per year, CPW did achieve the total two-year goal of completing updates for 32 HMPs. By focusing on updating all of the plans for a specific species in a specific region at the same time, CPW biologists hope to expedite the revision process going forward.

Additionally, CPW conducts annual assessments of big game herds to better understand their composition. In 2021 and 2022, CPW biologists classified 78,160 deer, 108,214 elk, and 25,761 pronghorn in Colorado. They also continue to monitor mule deer in five herds for annual doe survival and over-winter fawn survival. Data collected from this work informs herd management planning and regulation changes to ensure herds are moving towards their long-term management objectives. Staff’s goal was to increase the proportion of herds that fall within target management objective ranges by 5% each year. As of FY 22, the number of deer herds that are within their population objective range increased by 13%, but the number of elk and pronghorn herds that are within their population objective ranges did not increase. Conversely, the number of elk and pronghorn herds within their sex-ratio objective range increased by 12% and 7% respectively, but number of deer herds that are within their sex-ratio objective range did not increase. Moving population sex ratios to their objective ranges has proven challenging, as changes to license numbers need to be made gradually over many hunting seasons.

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. 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. In the fall of 2020 and 2021, CPW completed its first 5-year rotation of mandatory testing as prescribed in the CWD Response Plan, including mandatory testing in every deer herd in the state and in 14 priority elk herds. This cycle of testing helps to understand prevalence trends and the impact of previous management actions on reducing CWD prevalence. Statewide, mule deer appear to be most affected by CWD with especially high prevalence in some northeast and northwest herds. Several plains white-tailed deer herds also suffer high prevalence rates. CPW has targeted these severely affected deer herds for relatively aggressive CWD management actions and will monitor prevalence changes over time. In fact, CPW biologists have already seen a strong relationship between the number of hunting licenses offered and the CWD prevalence rate in mule deer bucks, with offering more licenses associated with less growth of CWD prevalence over time.

To manage 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 are 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. 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 and FY 22, aquatic biologists updated all of the 100+ sport fishery management summaries, which are now posted on CPW’s Fish Survey Summaries webpage.

### 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 funding program that gives 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, public access easements, and in some circumstances, fee title acquisitions. In FY 21, CPW closed on seven CWHP projects, increasing total CWHP interests by more than 12,660 acres. In FY 22, CPW funded conservation easements held by land trusts on 10,905 acres, acquired 1,129 acres of fee title, and secured public access on 10,255 acres of private land, resulting in an increase of more than 22,280 acres of CWHP interests. Through 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.

To support habitat preservation efforts through real property acquisition and related work, CPW and OIT staff completed development of a new project management system. Named "PAWLI" (for the Parks and Wildlife Land Interests it aids in granting and acquiring), the Salesforce-platform system builds on CPW's existing real estate inventory database, ALPINE. PAWLI replaces an aging system on an unsupported platform, providing a reliable database for managing real estate work. The integration of the project management and inventory systems improves reporting ability, data management, and data integrity, while streamlining processes and saving staff time and effort.

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 completed the CPW Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors Status Report which identifies policy, regulatory, and legislative opportunities to ensure the ongoing conservation of seasonal big game migration corridors and winter range. The Section also hired a full-time position for the coordination of wildlife movements in Colorado helping to deliver on the goals of the Executive Order.

FY 21 and FY 22 also saw several policy, regulatory and legislative opportunities to ensure the conservation of big game habitat and migration corridors, including:

- Updating the Colorado State Action Plan for Implementation of Department of Interior Secretarial Order 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors.
- Assisting with the development of the DNR Opportunities to Improve Sensitive Habitat and Movement Route Connectivity for Colorado's Big Game Species Report.
- Forming an internal working group to draft a definition of ungulate 'pinch points' and identify and map known ungulate pinch points, in response to rulemaking on Senate Bill (SB)-181, Protect Public Welfare Oil and Gas Operations.
- Funding four new habitat biologists to assist with on-going habitat improvement work to benefit connectivity for wildlife species including big game.
- Participating in the drafting of USGS Ungulate Migrations of the Western United States, Volume 2 (2022) and Volume 3 (in draft).
- Completing the East Slope and Plains Wildlife Prioritization Study (ESPWPS) that identified over 100 priority highway segments for wildlife mitigation.
- Working with the Colorado Wildlife Transportation Alliance, and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) to use the results of the West Slope Wildlife Prioritization Study and the ESPWPS to narrow the priorities to the top 3-5 per region to pursue future funding opportunities for wildlife crossing projects or other mitigation projects to decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- Creating a ROADKILL App to improve data collection to help identify wildlife vehicle collisions hotspots. This data is shared and joined with CDOT roadkill data to create a more robust dataset.

In addition, SB-151, Safe Crossings for Colorado Wildlife and Motorist, was signed into law by Governor Polis in June 2022. This bill creates the 'Colorado Wildlife Safe Passages Mitigation Fund' and allocates \$5 million towards wildlife crossing projects and funding to sustain the Colorado Wildlife Transportation Alliance.

CPW staff also continue to participate in meetings with interested stakeholders through the Colorado Wildlife Transportation Alliance, Colorado Connectivity, Corridors and Crossing Working Group, WAFWA's Wildlife Migration and Movement Working Group, and the USGS Migration Mapping team.

Staff use a statewide habitat database to monitor habitat improvement and treatment efforts. During FY 21 and FY 22, the CPW Habitat Unit completed more than 40 projects directly improving 15,050 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat. These accomplishments exceed the established goal for that time period, which was improving between 3,000 and 6,000 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat. 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 two-year period, the Habitat Unit also provided project planning and technical support, seed mixing logistics and seed storage (through the CPW Delta Seed Warehouse), and grant partnerships for more than 30,000 additional acres of wildlife habitat restoration activities throughout the western slope and front range of Colorado.

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. Through the C4C, about 590 acres were planted in FY 21 and 617 acres were planted in FY 22 as part of the initiative. Pending landowner interest, CPW should resume more intensive actions to result in up to 800 acres annually enrolled into the corners program.





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. In FY 21 and FY 22, 70 wetlands restoration projects were completed, improving 15,236 acres of wetland habitat, and far exceeding the goal of improving 1,000 acres annually.

In addition, CPW in collaboration with the Colorado Outdoor Partnerships (CO-OP), have 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. During FY 21, the CO-OP and CPW drafted guidance documents for the implementation of Regional Partnerships Initiative (as established in the Governor’s Executive Order B 2020 008, signed in October 2020). Through CPW’s partnership with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), CPW secured \$640,000 for first-year funding of the Regional Partnerships Initiative. Also in FY 21, a state-level vision and guidelines to support regional partnerships were crafted. As of June 30, 2022 ten regional partnerships have adopted the statewide vision, exceeding the goal of having six regional partnerships do so by the end of FY 22.

**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 essential to conserving Colorado’s SGCN. During FY 21 and FY 22, CPW’s Conservation Coordinators worked along with partners to manage nongame species and habitat through research, population status monitoring, reintroduction, habitat protection and restoration, achieving CPW’s goal to participate in collaborative planning and partnership processes for at least 10 terrestrial SGCN by the end of the two-year period. A sample of the work performed in FY 21 and FY 22 includes:

- Engaging with partner and stakeholder in the development of the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan

- Providing input to US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on multiple Endangered Species Act (ESA)-related processes, including the Gunnison Sage-grouse Recovery Plan and Recovery Implementation Strategy, black rail “threatened” listing proposal and final rule; pinyon jay listing petition, lesser prairie-chicken listing proposal, and the gray wolf status evaluation.
- Initiating the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Resource Management Plan Amendment processes for Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse.
- Continuing efforts, in coordination with the CPW Wildlife Health Program 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;
- Participating in Colorado Oil and Gas Commission rulemaking to address sensitive species conservation needs;
- Attending the annual coordination meeting with USFWS Colorado Ecological Services Field Office to discuss species conservation needs;
- Coordinating with multiple agencies on potential impacts of COVID-19 on bat populations including survey modifications, testing and rehabilitation protocols.

Ongoing population monitoring targets were also achieved in FY 21 and 22 with annual multi-species monitoring for bird and bat species through the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions and the North American Bat Monitoring Program; annual lek surveys for greater and Gunnison sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and greater and lesser prairie chicken; and ongoing monitoring of gray wolves. Additionally, CPW completed occupancy surveys for White-tailed ptarmigan, and initiated population status assessments for burrowing owl, black rail, massasauga, and olive-backed pocket mouse. Occupancy monitoring of Canada lynx in southwest Colorado also continued in FY 22 and CPW is planning to expand the monitoring statewide for FY23. Finally, CPW implemented disease monitoring and management for white-nose syndrome in bats and plague in prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets.





### 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. To aid in this process, in FY 21 and FY 22 the Water Section completed a “dashboard” spreadsheet tool capable of coordinating management and maximizing usage of CPW’s statewide water resources. The dashboard provides a concise monthly summary of water levels and water storage account balances at the most frequently requested sites with readily available data. The dashboard also provides a foundation that could be used to build a more automated system that incorporates additional sites and real-time reporting as facilities are equipped with modern instrumentation.

Also, in FY 21 and FY 22, the Water Section supported the regions in legally maintaining the water in ponds at several state parks including Staunton, Golden Gate, and Mueller. The Water Section also developed Substitute Water Supply Plans to maintain existing water levels and maximize the use of water, and provided guidance to regional staff on a number of water resource management issues, including a spreadsheet 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 and FY 22, the Water Section exceeded its goal to collect, evaluate, and analyze field data to support and formulate a minimum of 10 Instream Flow (ISF)/Natural Lake Level (NLL) recommendations per year for Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) consideration. During FY 21, Section staff collected, evaluated, and analyzed field data for 49 potential ISF/NLL recommendations and for an additional 22 potential ISF/NLL recommendations in FY 22. The team also led all necessary coordination with Regional and Aquatic staff for five ISF appropria-



tions and seven ISF acquisitions that were formally recommended to the CWCB, as well as many ongoing permanent and temporary acquisition projects. In addition, the Water Section provided ongoing biological consultation to the CWCB in relation to their active statements of opposition in water court to protect decreed ISF water rights, requests to inundate ISF water rights, requests to injure ISF water rights, and monitoring and enforcement of recent ISF acquisitions.

Following the signing of the Algal Toxin Administrative Directive (P-14) in July 2020, the Water Section assisted the regions with its implementation by providing sample collection kits and signs, android phones to run the CyAN app for monitoring blooms, and recommended actions when samples are positive for toxins. The CyAN app is now a public website where anyone can use satellite data to screen a lake for potential algae blooms. The Water Section updates this map as toxic algae blooms are observed and tested or are resolved. The Water Section also maintains a database of toxin results and photos, which are available to all CPW employees. In FY 21, 14 CPW waterbodies were tested 127 times. Algal toxins were present in 8 of those waterbodies, and five of those waterbodies had levels that exceeded guidance values. In FY 22, 28 CPW waterbodies were tested 146 times. Algal toxins were present in 14 of those waterbodies, and 7 of those waterbodies had levels that exceeded guidance values. All requests for supplies or support by waterbody managers were provided by the Water Section, and waterbody managers at the lakes testing positive for toxins 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. In some cases, waterbody managers with positive toxin results were provided with test strips, or the Water Section coordinated with CPW’s Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) program to collect additional samples for further analysis.

The Water Section also participated in six major hearings before the Water Quality Control Commission in FY21 and FY 22.

### Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions

To ensure conservation actions for wildlife resources and habitat are carried out in a scientifically sound and effective way, CPW’s research scientists conduct rigorous applied research on priority management issues. During FY 21 and FY 22, CPW’s research scientists completed over 63 annual progress reports on CPW research activities. In addition, research staff produced 55 publications in the peer-reviewed scientific literature from Jan 2021 through June 2022. These publications represent the volume and diversity of this work, used by CPW and wildlife professionals nationwide.

Research staff routinely assist with implementing research results in management programs. In FY 21 and FY 22, researchers completed “Science Applications Highlights” fact sheets that provide 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. The [FY 22 factsheet](#) is currently posted on the CPW Research website.

In addition, CPW researchers work closely with managers to interpret, communicate, and implement research findings. Research staff performance plans all have individual performance objectives for communicating research results. Throughout FY 21 and FY 22, researchers extensively communicated 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 international peer-reviewed publications.

Also during FY 21 and FY 22, Aquatics Section staff completed an extensive angler satisfaction survey to gauge, among other topics, anglers’ preferred methods or channels of communication. According to the survey results, most anglers prefer to communicate via email (39%), followed by the CPW website (11%) and online searches (11%). As a result, all of the Aquatic Biologists and all of the Senior Aquatic Staff now have their email addresses and phone numbers listed on the website.



Additionally, Staff will continue to provide content and material for the Fishing Report and other forms of email communication. Moreover, the Aquatic Staff have updated the content of the Aquatics/Fishing webpages and designed a new way to instantaneously update the website with fishing closure information. Aquatic Staff are also assisting with the design and development of the new CPW website. The 2020 Angler Survey Report also found that 94% of respondents felt like CPW's angling regulations and fishery management goals are appropriate.

## 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. During FY 19 and FY 20, CPW's Capital Development Section created an inventory of buildings and facilities to determine existing asset conditions and to prioritize maintenance needs and funding levels into the future. 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. During FY 22, CPW's Capital Development Section added approximately 1 million lineal feet of underground utility information to the GIS dataset. During that same time staff located and verified onsite utilities at the majority of state parks to improve the accuracy of the data, achieving the set goal of 50% confidence level on utility information. Having these utilities within a GIS system allows field staff to more easily identify utility locations for repairs and also avoid damaging those facilities when performing other improvements in the vicinity. Additionally, Staff presented the 5-year Capital Planning Report to the Leadership Team in October of 2021 in preparation for the 2021-2022 Capital Project Selection Process. Staff is now working to update the 5-year plan for the 2022-2023 Capital Project Selection Process.

Safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation at Colorado's state parks depends on healthy, well-maintained



Family swimming at Cherry Creek State Park

CPW

landscapes and proactive natural and cultural resource management. CPW's Resource Stewardship Section is responsible for compiling and studying resource information on all Colorado state parks. The Section also performs habitat mapping and habitat condition assessments. During FY 21 and FY 22, the Resource Stewardship Section completed 13 weed management surveys and 30 natural and cultural resource surveys, exceeding the goal of completing at least five weed surveys and at least four natural/cultural resource inventories on state parks each year. Data gathered from these projects inform state park management and development 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.

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

#### Fishers Peak State Park

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 began the process of developing Colorado's next state park. Throughout FY 2021, 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.

Throughout FY 22, Staff and partners worked to draft the Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan and is undergoing final review in the summer of 2022. The goals of the Master Plan included striking the appropriate design and management balance that supports protection, preservation, conservation and outdoor recreation. The Master Plan serves as an overarching guide, outlining management priorities and specific management direction related to operations for CPW staff. The draft Master Plan will be available online for public review and comment prior to finalization.

Also in FY 22, construction of approximately 17 miles of additional trails all stemming from the existing Fishers Peak Trailhead, including a trail to the peak and other looping trails in the area, has been underway.



Fishers Peak State Park

WAYNE D. LEWIS/CPW



Construction has progressed faster than anticipated given the mild winter and spring of 2022 and the trail is expected to be complete and open to the public in the summer or fall of 2023. At the end of FY22, a team of consultants was hired to provide professional planning, design and engineering for the park entrance, main park road, trailheads, visitor center parking, developed campgrounds and all associated utilities. This design project is due to be completed during the summer of 2023. Finally, two full time employees were hired to work at Fisher Peak State Park in FY 22: one ranger and one park resource technician.

**Colorado Clays State Recreation Area**

Also in FY 22, CPW closed on the purchase of the Colorado Clays Shooting Park in Adams County. CPW will take over ownership of the shooting park and will manage it as a state recreation area. Located just 30 minutes northeast of Denver and near Barr Lake State Park, Colorado Clays Shooting Park offers both recreational and competitive shooters the region’s widest variety of clay target shooting, including sporting clays, skeet and trap, as well as both rifle and pistol shooting. In 2021, Colorado Clays hosted over 30,000 visitors and threw over four million clay targets.

Finally, criteria for assessing future state parks have been featured with a story map on CPW’s website. These criteria are considered as CPW explores opportunities to expand the parks system and help demonstrate CPW’s commitment to meeting Colorado’s needs and advance CPW’s mission.

**Market the special qualities of Colorado’s state parks**

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, hosted more than 12 national and world-title shooting events and conferences in FY 21 and 16 major state, regional, national and world championship events in FY 22, bringing together



hundreds of participants and spectators from across the US and several foreign countries for each event. Post-conference surveys conducted for five of the largest events in FY 21 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.

**Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products**

CPW is taking steps to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at state parks using the latest technology. During FY 21 and FY 22, Staff created better transparency on how visitation is measured and calculated by replacing outdated counters and installing counters to track visitation on some trails. Progress towards this goal will continue as CPW implements the Keep Colorado Wild Pass in the coming years.

Additionally in FY 21 and FY 22, to better accommodate customers and make parks information and products more accessible, CPW implemented the following:

- Launched the My CPW app, which allows customers to electronically display their annual licenses without a carcass tag as well as park passes. It also provides a direct connection to cpwshop.com for mobile purchases and provides access to preference point records, electronic brochure PDFs, and has search and navigation tools to find external agents and CPW parks and offices. The app will continue to be enhanced to include more products and service
- 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.
- The reservation system was enhanced to automatically apply the Aspen Leaf discount for campground reservations for all customers holding the Aspen Leaf pass.
- A timed-entry reservation pilot for Eldorado Canyon State Park was launched in late July 2022 to allow customers to make a free timed-entry reservation for accessing the park on weekends and holidays.
- CPW replaced the previous park pass hang tags with an improved version made from a different material that doesn’t melt.
- More improvements made in FY 21 and FY 22 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. 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 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.

CPW hired Economic and Planning Systems Inc. and RRC to conduct a pricing study to look at willingness to purchase the Pass at various price points. Based on the study’s findings, the Division made a price recommendation of \$29, which was adopted by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in March 2022. To launch the Pass, CPW developed a range of marketing and communications materials in English and Spanish. CPW also hired Upstream Consulting to help conduct outreach to disproportionately impacted communities to raise awareness of the Pass and gather information about accessibility and affordability of Colorado state park passes.



Efforts to expand CPW’s retail program are also underway. In FY 21, 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. Gross sales revenue from the program in FY 21 exceeded \$1.5 million, far surpassing the \$1.0 million goal. Efforts to grow the program continued in FY 22 and products were added as they became available.

Additionally, over the last two years CPW has made consistent progress towards formalizing a Philanthropy Program. While there is still much to be done, significant progress was also made towards the creation of a long-term philanthropic plan to raise donated funds. Many initial activities and structural pieces have been put into place including:

- Creating a new donation web page
- Enabling donor-friendly transactional software (donation button)
- Beginning work to acquire a philanthropy-focused database to collect needed donor information in order to solicit and steward a growing philanthropic effort
- Developing a strategy to distribute donated funds within the CPW agency
- Creating the first report on the impact of donor funding, which is currently in progress.

Together in FY 21 and 22, private donations totaled almost \$1.5 million and add-on or round-up donations totaled over \$650,000. CPW’s efforts have increased donor support by more than \$440,000, or more than 50%, in FY 22 alone. The agency has focused mainly on private donations during the past two years, and corporate sponsorships have largely continued as they have in the past. Staff hope to grow this area further in the future.

#### **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. 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. Beginning with the FY 22 year end Commission report, a dashboard will be included in the quarterly report materials for review and presentation. Going forward, the metrics and the performance indicators will be reviewed and adjusted if needed, including determining how the Keep Colorado Pass data should be incorporated.

Alongside this work is the need to ensure that revenue from CPW’s various sources of funding is being received timely and fully. In FY 21, Financial Services staff conducted a review of existing concessionaire contracts for Boyd Lake State Park, and compiled an audit report which provided resulting findings and recommendations. In FY 22, specific revenue streams were reviewed to ensure revenue from various sources are being fully recognized.

#### **Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly**

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. The latest progress report is available [online](#).

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 Finance Subcommittee 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. Some of the materials developed in FY 21 included an introductory presentation on budgeting and financial basics, refined cash fund reports, and a new legislative tracking process with weekly email communications to staff throughout the legislative session. In FY 22, Financial Services staff added communication steps to the internal budget process to inform all employees of budget priorities, procedures, and decisions. Additionally, there has been more transparent decision making on mid-year budget adjustments using new systems developed by Financial Services.

#### **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, 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 developed questions for the upcoming survey, which will be rolled out in the near future. 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 the recruitment and development of a highly qualified and diverse workforce. During FY 21 and FY 22, CPW's Organizational Development Section continued refining the channels to identify and engage prospective employees. CPW's recruitment efforts during the past two years 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 in FY 21 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, participants provided more than 48 weeks of work at 21 state parks, 16 SWAs, and two state fish hatcheries.

CPW also continued its partnership with Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), a program serving underserved, culturally diverse youth in Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver counties. In FY 21, ELK sent their Urban Rangers to work side-by-side with CPW staff, where they gained professional experience with park



**Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) Urban Rangers at Golden Gate Canyon State 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. The Urban Rangers 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 planning a pilot internship program with three partner organizations Colorado Youth Corps Association, Hispanic Access Foundation, and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, which is slated to begin in FY 23. CPW staff have already been identified to host seven interns from these partner organizations.

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 other college systems to further the agency's future recruitment goals. In FY 21, CPW 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. In FY 22, CPW joined the Advisory Council for Littleton Public Schools to support the development of the new CTE Natural Resource Pathway, including participating in quarterly meetings to support the design and development of a new building dedicated to CTE programming. Similarly, CPW continued to work with Jefferson County Public Schools to develop a Natural Resource Pathway at one of their high schools. CPW also established a partnership with the Program Director for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Energy CTE Pathways at Colorado Community College System (CCCS) and presented at a workshop for 22 CTE teachers at the Mid-winter Agriculture CTE conference in January 2022, where curriculum developed on wildlife crossings was highlighted. Feedback collected showed high interest in having access to more curriculum resources by CPW for incorporation in CTE programming.

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. While the team is currently conducting a thorough review of applicant and hiring data for each job classification, progress slowed on completing an audit on the application rates from key partner organizations due to staffing challenges at the Department of Natural Resources Human Resources Department. However, CPW staff did implement a tracking system to collect data on how many YIP interns come from key partner organizations in the interim. 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. Unfortunately, the Daniels Leadership Program was canceled during FY 21 due to COVID restrictions, but restarted with in-person training 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 relationships 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 role 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 current and new employees.



### Attract Inspired Volunteers committed to CPWs mission

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. 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. In FY 22, 4,459 volunteers contributed 311,150 volunteer hours, which is equivalent to 150 full time staff and an over \$9.8 million economic value.

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. 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 June 2021, the team offered five training sessions 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. In FY 22, the annual Education and Volunteer Training returned to an in-person format, with 31 attendees from all four regions. The theme of the training was "Navigating a New World: Reconnecting and Cultivating Resilience in a Time of Change." Sessions focused on the power of storytelling, trends in interpretation and volunteerism, managing our programs through change, and learning resiliency from Colorado wildlife.

In both FY 21 and FY 22, the team conducted the annual volunteer survey. The most recent (2021) survey results indicated that:

- 90% of survey respondents are satisfied with their volunteer experience;
- 89% enjoy volunteering with Colorado Parks and Wildlife;

- 87% agree that their volunteer service is meaningful and makes a positive difference;
- 87% would recommend volunteering with CPW to a friend or family member;
- Volunteers contribute financially to CPW in the following ways:
  - 9% of respondents have purchased a hunting or fishing license
  - 46% have purchased a state park pass
  - 42% have purchased merchandise
  - 38% have purchased campsite reservations
  - 29% have donated in-kind goods
  - 23% have donated monetarily

An annual staff survey was also implemented in both FY 21 and FY 22. The most recent (2021) staff survey indicates:

- 92% of survey respondents report that they are satisfied with their experience working with volunteers.
- 94% agree that volunteers are partners in achieving their work.
- 94% agree that volunteers contribute unique capabilities and skills that make our CPW team stronger.
- 93% agree that volunteers help meet their program/site goals.
- 85% agree that volunteering helps people understand our mission and agency better.

In order to amplify the work of partner organizations, Volunteer Program staff began cultivating relationships with groups sharing CPW's focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (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 (VOC) and Friends of Colorado State Parks, and participated in VOC's Pride project at Golden Gate Canyon State Park in June 2022, and an American Sign Language ASL-supported volunteer project in 2021.

The goal of conducting a literature review and regional listening sessions to learn how cultural and community factors impact volunteer behavior was also achieved in FY 22. Twenty-one scientific research articles were analyzed and summarized, focusing on community factors that affect volunteerism. Several potential considerations were developed to help the volunteer program improve its strategies and operations to effectively achieve CPW's mission, broaden and deepen community engagement, and ensure that volunteers and staff have a positive and inclusive experience. A condensed, visual summary report has also been produced to more effectively communicate the results with staff.

### 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.



CPW volunteers presenting at Pueblo Eagle Days

MIKE DELLIVENERI/CPW



During FY 21 and FY 22, Marketing Section staff efforts were aimed at better understanding gaps and opportunities in the agency’s ongoing communication approaches. Staff reviewed messaging and branding across various channels including video, social media and print pieces. In FY 21, 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. In FY 22, Section staff reviewed 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. 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.

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 found that the baseline response time has consistently been around five days. To further expedite frequently requested data, staff developed PowerBI IPAWS reports that are easier to keep updated and are 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, allowing for staff to have immediate responses to queries for these data.

#### **Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement**

CPW strives to engage stakeholders from various interests in planning and decision making processes. The agency uses several tools including public comment forms, newsletters, educational outreach, town halls, virtual 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 a Request for Proposals (RFP), and audited the content on the existing website. The RFP was released in August 2021, and a vendor was selected in December 2021. Staff are currently in the final stages of contract completion. As of June 2022, an audit of the website content is more than 50% complete.

Finding effective ways to involve broader, more diverse audiences is crucial to CPW’s mission and strategic goals. During FY 21, CPW adopted 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. These principles were incorporated into a presentation training webinar shared across DNR divisions and provided through the state compliance training modules. In FY 22, CPW put these Principles into practice by incorporating them into the Fishers Peak Master Planning Process, the Wolf Reintroduction and Restoration process, planning for the Partners in the Outdoors Conference and the design and development of the Outdoor Equity Fund.

Another key communication platform is CPW’s annual Partners in the Outdoors Conference. Through the annual Partners in the Outdoors Conference, CPW facilitates a platform for organizations to collaborate around the shared vision of advancing and balancing outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado. During 2021, the Conference continued its growth trajectory and achieved attendance that surpassed the goal of 620 people. Due to the pandemic, the Conference was held virtually, enabling the conference to extend its reach to over 900 attendees, representing 400 organizations. 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.

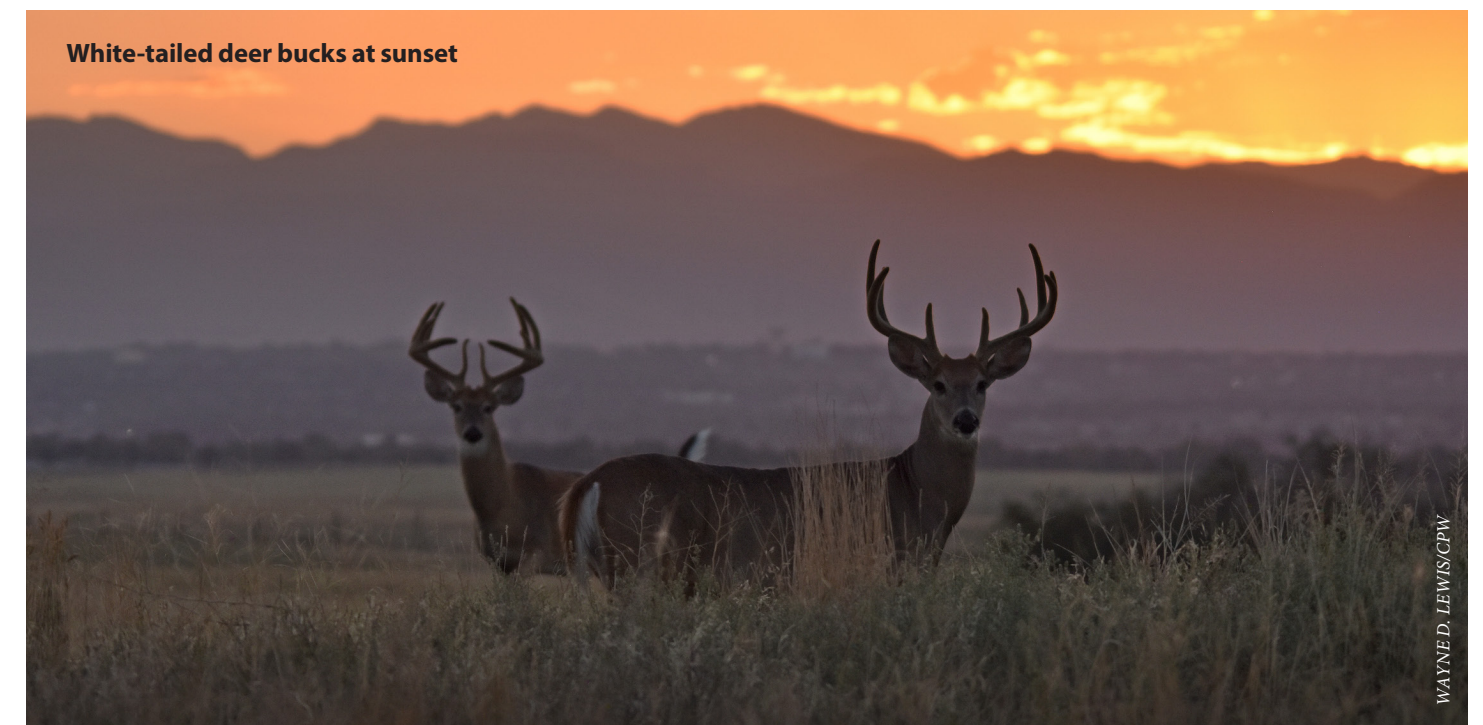
In 2022, the Partners in the Outdoors Conference was held in person for the first time since 2019. 2022 Conference registration numbers were 594 (the venue was limited to 600 people), representing 211 organizations. Thanks to a sponsorship commitment of \$15,000 from GOCO, CPW was able to provide scholarships to 30 participants, covering registration and lodging costs. In addition, registration discount codes were offered to an additional 25 scholarship applicants. Almost all scholarship recipients were first-time conference attendees. In addition, registration fees are charged on a sliding scale, allowing attendees to choose the fee that best fits their individual or organization’s funding situation.

Although there is great value to in-person conferences, the virtual conferences held in 2020 and 2021 did have the highest “attendance” numbers and the highest number of organizations represented. This information is valuable as staff make plans for future engagements with partners.

#### **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. The CWC challenged the hired advertising agency, R&R Partners, to think of new and innovative ways to increase engagement with the target audience and adjust target audience media consumption as a result of 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. 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. Because of its success, 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 natural resources. Hunters, anglers and other outdoor recreationists have access to Colorado’s lands through the Public Access Program (PAP). After undertaking a large expansion of the PAP program in 2020 and 2021, enrollments in the PAP remained largely stable at 966,000 acres. The large expansions in 2020 and 2021 doubled the amount of publicly accessible trust land from 478,000 in 2018.

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. To meet the goal of improving trail recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources, the State Trails Program implemented a pilot program for the construction, maintenance and planning & support categories of the non-motorized trail grants. The pilot program included updating the scoring criteria to ensure grant reviewers were considering wildlife impacts, adding questions to the application focused on how potential impacts could be avoided or minimized, asking applicants to share maps of existing trails to help staff and grant reviewers consider the potential impacts of the project on the larger landscape scale, and sharing Wildlife Impact Memos publicly and asking applicants to address any comments related to their project during their grant presentation to the review subcommittee. During the pilot, the review committee also placed an emphasis on funding maintenance projects to address the increased need to repair and improve existing trails. During these cycles, 51% of the funds were awarded to maintenance projects which was an increase of 33% from the previous cycle.

State Trails Program staff also convened a Land Manager Task Force made up of representatives from agencies across the state including the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as several municipalities and county-level open space departments. The goal of the Task Force was to align the Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind handbook, which was originally published in 1998, with current knowledge and experiences guiding Colorado land managers how to plan for trails while addressing wildlife impacts. The Task Force met ten times to create, edit and finalize the document. This work was also supported by an internal Technical Oversight team composed of regional field staff, Deputy Regional Managers, Wildlife Biologists, Area Wildlife Managers, Trails Program, Planning and Policy, Resources Stewardship, GIS, and Land Use Coordinators, and a Stakeholder Advisory Group, made up of representatives of recreationists, community organizations, conservation groups, sportspersons, stewardship groups, land trusts, academic researchers and Great Outdoors Colorado.

The updated handbook reflects current best practices and recommendations, adds information about the wildlife review process for the trail grant selection, and shares case studies of exemplary trail planning or management. This updated document was finished and published in print and on the website on June 30, 2021. The document has been shared with CPW staff, local, state and federal land managers, State Trails Grant applicants, recreational trail users, and conservation groups, to help serve as a framework to bring disparate groups into a cooperative planning process.

Another way that CPW encourages Coloradans and visitors to experience the outdoors, while recreating responsibly, is by offering educational and interpretive programs. 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. Additional communication with field staff to improve reporting was undertaken in FY 22. However, problems with the database persisted and staff were not able to meet their target of having 90% of sites reporting. Improving the reporting and tracking process for education and interpretation programming is an activity being carried over into the next operational plan.

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

CPW manages more than 1,400 facilities across Colorado, including buildings, shooting ranges, dams, roads, trails and other constructed facilities that 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 115 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 provides critical information CPW’s Engineers need to plan for risk based repairs and preventative maintenance. As of FY 22, six of the greatest risk dams have been repaired, two more have funding to enable full repairs, six of the remaining priority dams have full repairs planned in the next 5+ years.





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 of 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. 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.

In FY 22, the Hatchery Section began work on Phase III of the Hatchery Modernization Plan. Phase III builds on the results of Phase II to identify which facilities to modernize and provides a comprehensive design for modernizing Mt. Shavano Fish Hatchery. In March 2022, CPW staff determined the deliverables from the consultant were insufficient and halted Phase III to allow for a revision to the scope of work for the project, delaying the project for several months. The revised scope is now complete and work with the consultant has recently resumed work.



Mt. Shavano Fish Hatchery, Salida, CO

MIKE DELLIVENERI/CPW

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 continued work on a capital construction project to repair a non-functional well at the Roaring Judy Hatchery. This project will increase the water supply to the hatchery allowing for improved fish health and a potential 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 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. Also, on March 1, 2022, Colorado Parks and Wildlife launched the My CPW app through our licensing vendor Aspira. The app currently allows customers to electronically display their annual licenses without a carcass tag as well as non-vehicle park passes. It also provides a direct connection to cpwshop.com for mobile purchases and provides access to preference point records, electronic brochure PDFs, and has search and navigation tools to find external agents and CPW parks and offices. The app will continue to be enhanced to include more products and services in the near future.

Other improvements made to the IPAWS interface during FY 21 and FY 22 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.

Improving the registration renewal processes by decreasing the number of mail-in renewals for OHVs, boats, and snowmobiles and instead directing customers to online renewals is also a goal of CPW. In FY 21 alone, mail-in renewals for snowmobiles decreased by 48 percent, OHVs by 31 percent, and boats by 42 percent. Policies and procedures were also updated in FY 22 to allow customers to print their confirmation letter after registering or renewing their vehicle/vessel to show proof of registration prior to physical decals arriving in the mail.

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. In FY 21 and 22, CPW formed new partnerships with community vendors while removing aged systems, installing new phone systems, re-cabling sites, improving and replacing infrastructure and establishing, upgrading and improving broadband connectivity. They have replaced the phone systems at three state parks and upgraded or established new internet service at 31 CPW locations including CPW Headquarters, State Parks, Regional and Area offices, maintenance shops, hatcheries and our Native Aquatic Restoration Facility using a variety of technologies.



### **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 and FY 22 Partners in the Outdoors Conference planning committee and as support for the conference. In FY 22, CPW continued its work with Children and Nature Network (C&NN) to build and improve its capacity for supporting young leaders. Young leaders continued to be engaged in the conference planning committee and helped implement new key components such as the affinity space. In addition, C&NN hosted a pre-conference workshop called Rising Generations to support the young professionals attending the conference and C&NN brought 10 young leaders from their program. The 2022 Partners in the Outdoors Conference had the greatest participation among young professionals, likely due to the sliding scale registration fee options, scholarships and these connections with partner organizations.

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. CPW, GOCO, and the CO-OP are developing a statewide framework to connect regional partnerships in a manner that supports the individual and unique efforts of Colorado's communities. In the spring of 2022, CPW announced the recipients of the second round of Outdoor Regional Partnership grant funding bringing the number of regional partnerships to 10. Combined these partnerships cover almost half the State and 27 counties. GOCO and CPW will offer additional grant opportunities to support this effort in the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023.

The spring 2022 grant recipients include:

- Northwest Colorado Outdoor Coalition located in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties,
- Central Colorado Recreation Partnership located in Chaffee, Gunnison and Lake Counties,
- Outside 285 Partnership located in Clear Creek, Douglas, Jefferson and Park Counties,
- Two Rivers Conservation and Recreation Roundtable located in Mesa, Delta and Montrose Counties,
- Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance located in El Paso, Teller and Fremont Counties and
- NoCo PLACES 2050 located in Larimer, Boulder, Gilpin, Clear Creek and Jefferson Counties.

### **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 publicly across all communication channels. In FY 22, Marketing Section staff focused efforts on the new Keep Colorado Wild Pass rollout, launching new webpages and distributing printed marketing materials in both English and Spanish, as well as through broadcast segments on TV and Radio. Digital marketing was also a focus of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass, with extensive advertising on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Google and YouTube.

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

CPW is constantly trying to better understand and adapt to the current demand for outdoor recreation activities in Colorado. With a goal of offering hands-on training that meets current recreational demands and trends, CPW's Boating Safety Program offered several paddle (stand-up paddle boarding, canoeing and kayaking) events in FY 21 and 22, in partnership with Black Packers, Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors. Participants were provided with basic instruction and educated about the importance of wearing a personal floatation device (PFD). CPW is continuing to work toward a more formalized hands-on paddle program for the public that can be taught by CPW personnel. The Boating Safety Program also continues to fund additional boating safety signage and signs that are geared specifically toward paddlers.

Better understanding how to measure participant satisfaction has also been a goal of CPW's. In FY 21, efforts to collect baseline measures of participation satisfaction were stymied by staffing changes and health restrictions resulting from COVID. In FY 22, the Education Section pilot tested three methods for implementing participant surveys at several events across the state, including providing QR codes with on-site completion where cell service was available, sending a post-event email with a survey link for events with registration requirements, and providing QR codes with off-site completion options where cell service was not available. Staff found the completion rates were highest when cell service was available or a direct link to the survey was emailed to participants. However, more work is needed to be able to implement these types of surveys on a larger scale.





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