



## Executive Summary

[To be added in later drafts after further development of the plan.]

## Introduction and Background

On June 26, 2011, Governor Hickenlooper signed into law Senate Bill 11-208 which merged the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (State Parks) and the Division of Wildlife (DOW) to become Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The purpose of this merger was threefold— to find efficiencies that benefit both programmatic areas, to ensure greater long-term financial viability, and to improve opportunities for outdoor recreation in Colorado.<sup>1</sup> The legislation recognized that combining divisions would further the shared and mutually-beneficial goals and objectives that were identified in the strategic plans that had recently been developed for both former divisions.

In 2012, House Bill 12-1317 directed CPW to discuss and formulate a strategic plan with a focus on issues, efficiencies and cost savings related to the merger (C.R.S. § 33-9-101 (11) (a)). To address these legislative requirements, the Parks and Wildlife Commission and CPW staff produced a strategic plan and merger report termed the *Path Forward*. This document builds upon the 2010 State Parks and DOW strategic plans, while incorporating shared CPW strategies resulting from the merger. Additionally, the *Path Forward* reports on the required merger-related information, seeks alignment with goals of significant partners such as the Department of Natural Resources and Great Outdoors Colorado, and incorporates meaningful statewide input gathered from the general public and CPW stakeholders. Overall, the *Path Forward* serves as a general report on the merger of Parks and Wildlife while also establishing a shared vision for the future of CPW.

Even before the merger, the two former divisions shared similar values and objectives. From 1963-1972, the divisions were part of a combined department of Game, Fish and Parks. While they were designated as two separate divisions within the Department of Natural Resources in 1972, elements of Colorado State Parks and DOW have worked closely together over the years. Today, there are more commonalities between the two prior divisions than there are differences. The existing 2010 strategic plans for both agencies highlighted the importance of conservation and management of natural resources and the importance of outdoor recreation. As a merged agency, CPW has an opportunity to provide a multitude of essential functions for the state of Colorado and its visitors in an even more effective manner.

The importance of CPW's mission is clearly supported by the economic and recreational outcomes that result from CPW services. Hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing bring an estimated economic impact of \$3 billion (including secondary impacts) and support an estimated 33,800 jobs in Colorado.<sup>2</sup> Outdoor recreation at state parks adds about \$1.7 billion per year to Colorado's economy.<sup>3</sup>

Merging State Parks and DOW “represents an historic proposal with wide-reaching ramifications. Colorado’s outdoor resources form the very fabric of our state’s self-image. The role that Colorado Parks and Wildlife will play in the quality of life and environment is critical to the citizens we serve.”

*CPW Merger Transition Plan*

<sup>1</sup> Colorado Parks and Wildlife. 2011. “Merger Implementation Plan”. Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> BBC Research and Consulting. 2008. The Economic Impacts of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching in Colorado.

<sup>3</sup> Corona Research. 2009. Colorado State Parks Marketing Assessment. Visitor Expenditure Analysis, 2008-2009.



CPW provides outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing opportunities for more than 12 million state park visitors, 284,000 licensed hunters and 733,000 licensed anglers. About 45% of Coloradans report that they visited state parks regularly.<sup>4</sup> Recent studies indicate that roughly 18% of Coloradans are anglers and almost 5% of Coloradans hunt.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, over 80% of all Coloradans utilize trails and over 50% participate in water sports.<sup>6</sup> Overall, activities supported by CPW result in over 24 million recreation days per year in Colorado.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife clearly benefits the state and its citizens. However, population growth, forest health issues, non-native species, and numerous other social and natural factors are constantly presenting new challenges to the successful operations of park and wildlife programs. CPW is also faced with financial challenges such as shortfalls in income from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The *Path Forward* will report on strides that CPW has taken to address these challenges, as well as to provide a general vision for the future activities of Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

### Key Steps in the Planning Process

Development of the *Path Forward* was a collaborative effort and is reflective of the guidance and input provided by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission), the Department of Natural Resources, CPW stakeholders and the general public.

Special effort was made to develop the *Path Forward* building upon a foundation of recently-developed documents while also adhering to a conservative budget and tight timeline. Review and synthesis of key components of strategic plans from the two prior divisions, review and synthesis of other relevant statewide and agency planning efforts, and direct input from stakeholders and the general public all played an important role in the development of this strategic plan and merger report.

### Guiding Resources

CPW referred to a number of plans, reports and other documents to help inform development of the *Path Forward*. This was to ensure that the *Path Forward* was based on the best available information, as well as to ensure that CPW's direction aligned with statewide, department-wide direction and the strategies of key partners. A sampling of some of the internal documents that were reviewed early in the strategic planning process included: State Parks and Division of Wildlife strategic plans from 2010; CPW Merger Implementation Plan 2012; and Commission Strategic Priorities (December 2012).

Soon after State Parks and the DOW officially merged in July 1, 2011, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Leadership Team developed 20 overarching *Guiding Principles* to provide a framework, or "organizational philosophy" for establishing CPW's newly-combined programs and regions, and to help chart the course for further organizational restructuring. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of concepts like partnerships, improving funding, fostering collaboration, and pushing decisions to staff delegated closest to the land, community, and customer wherever possible. These

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<sup>4</sup> Corona Research. 2008. *Colorado State Parks Marketing Assessment Public Survey*.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

<sup>6</sup> [2013 SCORP Public Survey](#)



guiding principles are reflected in many of the objectives and strategies that are included in the Path Forward Strategic Plan.

Other planning efforts with a statewide focus that proved particularly relevant included: the 2013 Department of Natural Resources Strategic Operational Plan; the Office of Economic Development and International Trade's 2011 *Colorado Blueprint*; the 2008 *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP); and *Colorado's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* (2006). The 2010 *Great Outdoors Colorado Strategic Plan* and state and federal policies and directives related to Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreation Trails, etc. were also evaluated to ensure that the Path Forward outlined strategic priorities that were consistent with other partner efforts and state and federal legislative direction.

### **Colorado Parks & Wildlife Commission**

One of the Commission's central functions is supporting the Division's mission and its responsibilities to its customers and constituents. The Commission also provides overarching vision, leadership and oversight to the agency via policy direction. The *Path Forward* is a key tool in this effort.

The Commission's 11 members were provided opportunities to participate in the formulation of the Path Forward at key junctures. The Commission was particularly helpful with providing suggestions and guidance related to the planning process, shaping the architecture of the plan, as well as reviewing and approving the draft and final strategic plan.

In early 2012, the newly-formed Commission identified three core priorities that served as important themes looking ahead to the future. These include ~~including~~ financial sustainability, recruitment and retention, and habitat preservation/enhancement. These priorities have remained as standing Commission agenda items; they have components that are relevant to state parks, wildlife and outdoor recreation; and they serve as a centerpiece to the are woven within the Path Forward's overarching priorities.

### **Public Input**

Public input was an important part of the planning process. Key outdoor recreation and wildlife stakeholder groups and the general public were also informed of the *Path Forward* planning process via direct outreach, social media (e.g., CPW Facebook page), and the CPW website. CPW provided opportunities for public comment early in the planning process through Commission meetings and other established venues, such as the Colorado Sportsmen's Roundtable and Agriculture Roundtable. CPW made an effort to reach out to and hear from the public around Colorado through four open house meetings across the state, as well as a statewide "telephone town hall" meeting to solicit ideas and suggestions for addressing key issues like financial sustainability, recruitment and retention, and habitat preservation/enhancement. Input shared by the public also provided a basis for developing strategic plan objectives and desired outcomes. *[TO BE COMPLETED AFTER OUTREACH IS COMPLETE].*



### Issues and Trends

#### External Considerations

##### Population Growth and Demographic Shifts

Between 2000 and 2010, Colorado's population increased by 16.9% and total population grew to just over 5.1 million (US Census Bureau, 2012). State forecasters project that Colorado's population will exceed 7.1 million by 2040, with greatest growth rates projected in or near the Front Range and in mountain counties. This projected population growth will present challenges to CPW such as stress to wildlife habitats, trails and demand for resources, but may also present opportunities. While traditional customer communities remain very important, new opportunity markets may allow CPW to reach more Colorado citizens. Important changes in Colorado's population that may affect CPW customers are:

- Continued rapid growth in Colorado's population, especially along the Front Range and other population centers in Colorado, with generally slow or even stagnant growth in other areas. CPW's opportunities and challenges in serving an "urbanized" population will increase in the future.
- A rapidly increasing portion of the population over 65, involving new and different expectations from CPW.
- The growth rate of the Hispanic population in Colorado is significantly greater than other portions of the population, which in turn requires different outreach strategies and opportunities to generate new customers.
- In-migration from other states, primarily by young adults and families, who move to Colorado due to an expanding job market, yet who are not familiar with CPW.

These opportunity markets will increase in Colorado over the next 20 years. The primary challenges facing CPW are to assure that current strategies effectively engage our existing, but changing, customer base and to generate new strategies that engage users.

##### Environmental Challenges

Colorado continues to face significant environmental issues. Drought, insect outbreaks, invasive species, habitat changes and wildfire have intensified over the past decade or more, resulting in greater challenges or costs to CPW. Drought directly affects water supply and fluctuations, which in turn affect boating, fishing, park use and aquatic species conservation. Wildlife habitats are affected by invasive species, insect infestations or wildfires, thereby impacting hunting, wildlife viewing or species conservation efforts. And wildfires or insect outbreaks can dramatically change recreation opportunities at parks or on trails around Colorado.

##### Public Expectations

Understanding public expectations, now and in the future, can provide CPW with the knowledge to anticipate how to effectively satisfy customer needs. Recent public survey data provide an indicator of the expectations that the public has for CPW. Clean, safe, well-managed state parks are important not only to park visitors, but also to the general public. Park users also place a high priority on maintaining quality facilities with some level of balance for new development. Trails continue to be a priority for Coloradans, with increased interest in regional connecting trail networks. Surveys indicate that big game hunters want both quality hunts and the ability to hunt each year, and that hunters in general enjoy hunting as an experience even if not successful. Anglers are generally satisfied with their fishing experiences in Colorado and they value diverse and convenient fishing opportunities.



### Relevant Agency Considerations

#### Financial Challenges

CPW is faced with several recent financial challenges. General Fund support for State Parks from the Colorado Legislature was completely eliminated in 2011; in the early 1990's General Fund support of State Parks exceeded 30 percent of the agency operating budget. For Wildlife programs, the Division must ensure the long-term viability of the main Wildlife Cash Fund, which is supported by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. The health of this fund is related to a long-term decline in the number of people hunting across the United States. Hunting revenues comprise a majority of wildlife revenues. Potential reductions in hunting license sales have the potential to significantly affect all of the Division's wildlife programs.

CPW operational costs for wildlife already exceed revenue, and financial projections estimate that this deficit will continue without substantial steps. Park operational costs are projected to exceed projected revenues within three years. To address this, CPW leadership, working with DNR and the Commission, are developing financial plans that will restore agency financial sustainability. Failure to rectify this financial structural imbalance will jeopardize CPW's ability to meet long-term operational and capital investment needs, for both parks and wildlife operations.

#### CPW User Trends

CPW's existing customer base is changing. Parks visitation generally is increasing slightly faster than Colorado's population growth over the last 10 years, with indications that this trend should continue. The number of hunters and anglers in Colorado has not kept pace with population growth, with the number of hunters declining most dramatically. The number of anglers as a portion of the Colorado population continues to shrink, but there has been a positive trend in fishing participation over the past 10 years.<sup>7</sup> Given that hunting and fishing licenses represent about 40 percent of total CPW revenues, these trends are of great importance. In addition, our current hunting and angling populations are aging. This trend, also seen in the general population of Colorado, has the potential to change the license purchase pattern and demands of our current hunters, anglers and park users. Demographic patterns in the statewide population discussed above suggest several "opportunity" cohorts that could be primary targets of our hunting, angling and outdoor recreation recruitment efforts. Path Forward Strategic Plan

### Path Forward Strategic Plan

#### CPW Mission Statement

*"To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, provide a quality state parks system, and 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."*

#### CPW Vision Statement

*"Colorado sustains a natural abundance of fish and wildlife, and high quality lands and waters. These resources give residents and visitors opportunities to recreate in the outdoors. Agency employees and their partners work together the public trust and provide outstanding customer service through recreational programs, amenities, and services."*

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<sup>7</sup> CPW. 2013. *CPW Customer and Market Trends Report – 2013*.



## Strategic Priorities

### **Recruitment and Retention: Connect People to the Outdoors by Providing Quality Outdoor Opportunities and Settings**

CPW is naturally positioned to be a leader in providing opportunities and settings for children, families and friends to recreate and connect with the outdoors, promote healthy lifestyles, and learn more about the natural world. CPW also believes that broader participation in outdoor recreation is needed to attract a new generation of park and wildlife advocates, and to sustain many of the wildlife management and programmatic activities that CPW oversees.

~~As a~~The Division ~~that~~ currently relies heavily on revenue from user fees such as the sale of hunting and fishing licenses ~~and, as well as~~ park passes and OHV, snowmobile and boat registrations. CPW recognizes that more must be done to recruit and retain hunters and anglers, as well as to attract additional park visitors and to provide better opportunities for trail users and water sport enthusiasts. This priority also intersects with the issue of ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the Division.

- *Objective 1: Promote public awareness of and participation in Colorado’s outdoor and wildlife recreation opportunities.*
- *Objective 2: Provide a variety of hunting, fishing, and trapping opportunities on public and private lands.*
- *Objective 3: Maintain or increase current levels of hunter and angler satisfaction and participation.*
- *Objective 4: Operate, maintain and enhance park resources and services to meet visitor needs and enrich the Colorado State Parks experience.*
- *Objective 5: Promote participation by youth and families in hunting, fishing, parks visitation and other outdoor recreation activities by providing accessible and meaningful recreational and educational opportunities.*
- *Objective 6: Continue to direct leadership, support, and resources to promote and establish a statewide interconnected trails network.*
- *Objective 7: Seek adequate resources to meet current and future demand for outdoor recreational opportunities.*

<p>DESIRED OUTCOMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased participation in hunting, fishing, and park visitation.</li> <li>• Colorado’s residents and visitors have a greater awareness and appreciation for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation opportunities offered by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.</li> <li>• Loyalty and satisfaction of our current customers is maintained and increased.</li> <li>• <u>A new generation of wildlife advocates <del>and</del> park users <u>and outdoor enthusiasts</u> are engaged in outdoor recreation.</u></li> <li>• <u>The agency plays a lead role in growing and nurturing support among the public for our parks and outdoor recreation.</u></li> </ul>
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## **Habitat Preservation and Enhancement: *Support and Facilitate Habitat Protection and Natural Resource Stewardship***

Colorado’s abundant outdoor recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, are directly linked to the quality and diversity of our natural resources. Residents of Colorado understand this important point. Of Colorado voters responding to the 2012 *Conservation in the West* poll administered by Colorado College, 86% said that even with state budget problems, we should still find money to protect and maintain Colorado’s land, water and wildlife; 82% said the same about state parks.

Whether it be hunting a bull elk in the Weminuche wilderness, catching a smallmouth bass at Lake Pueblo State Park, or hiking among the pines of Staunton State Park, opportunities like these rely on preserving, protecting, and proactively managing our natural resources. This is easier said than done, and requires that CPW utilize the best available science, employ models for efficient and effective resource planning, and conduct sound on-the-ground management.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife must also continue to demonstrate leadership in habitat protection and natural resource stewardship not only within our parks and state wildlife areas, but also in concert with our private landowner and public land management partners.

- *Objective 1: Protect, restore, and enhance habitat for fish and wildlife.*
- *Objective 2: Cooperate with other agencies and conservation organizations to collect, share, and disseminate natural resource information and to coordinate resource management.*
- *Objective 3: Manage park and wildlife resources proactively to prevent and control introductions of non-native species and prevent and control fish and wildlife diseases.*
- *Objective 4: Promote the stewardship of properties managed by CPW through proactive management and sound planning to minimize impacts and keep resources intact for future generations.*
- *Objective 5: Ensure the long-term viability of native fish and wildlife and strive to maintain the broadest representation of the diversity of native wildlife in suitable habitats across the state.*
- *Objective 6: Maintain healthy and viable game and sport fish populations sufficient to meet the demand for hunting, fishing and trapping, while minimizing landowner conflicts.*

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- Quality fish and wildlife habitat is conserved, maintained, and restored.
- Colorado citizens are satisfied with the diversity and health of the state’s native fish and wildlife, and with the number and variety of fish and game available for harvest.
- CPW is regarded as a comprehensive source for fish and wildlife information and a leader in natural resource stewardship.
- State parks and other CPW properties are managed sustainably.
- Colorado’s fish and wildlife is managed to minimize the need for federal listings under the Endangered Species Act.



## **Financial Sustainability: *Stabilize and Strengthen Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Financial Condition***

The recent economic recession, projected budget shortfalls, and instability of certain funding sources have required that CPW place a heightened emphasis on long-term financial sustainability. In order to position itself for success and effectively carry out its mission in the future, CPW must continue to implement creative approaches to strengthen its financial condition. This means identifying additional operational efficiencies, using cost-saving measures, employing innovative technologies, seeking alternative sources of revenue and, if necessary, reconfiguring or divesting assets. In addition, CPW should continue to devote financial and staffing resources to the areas of greatest need and public benefit, and avoid investing in infrastructure or initiatives that do not align with the agency's mission or lead to undue financial burdens.

- *Objective 1: Increase funding as needed to meet legal mandates and public expectations.*
- *Objective 2: Identify efficiencies and eliminate unnecessary costs.*
- *Objective 3: Develop strategies to enhance existing and secure new and more sustainable funding sources.*
- *Objective 4: Effectively market and expand awareness of and support for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.*
- *Objective 5: Maintain accountability and transparency in all financial decisions.*

### DESIRED OUTCOMES

- CPW can more effectively serve the public and manage fish, wildlife, parks and trails by meeting current and long-term financial needs.
- CPW is recognized as an effective and efficient state agency with a high level of customer satisfaction.
- Increased awareness about the agency's long-term funding needs among the public that enjoys or benefits from wildlife, parks or trails leads to greater support for these values.

## **Merger Report**

A primary goal of the merger of State Parks and the Division of Wildlife was to create more efficient and effective services through economies of scale and use of shared resources while creating a more comprehensive outdoor recreation mission for the agency. Since the merger legislation of 2011 and 2012, a great deal of work has been undertaken to plan and implement the merger.





A review of activities that preceded the merger provides valuable historical context. Prior to the merger, the former Division of Wildlife implemented a series of budget reductions to address declining revenues, including one-time reductions in capital expenditures of \$15.7 million and \$11.5 million made in FY 09-10 and FY 10-11, respectively.

Also, State Parks took aggressive steps to address reductions in revenue several years prior to the merger. As recently as FY 08-09, State Parks received \$6.7 million in General Funds, but by FY 11-12, this had dropped to zero. To adapt, Parks took the following steps: eliminated 5 percent of its permanent positions and 10% of its seasonal employees; increased fees for daily passes, camping reservations and boat registration; significantly reduced administrative costs; cut services at Bonny Lake State Park during the winter months; and redirected certain funds to cover operating shortfalls.

From July 2011 through February 2012, with the creation of Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the agency developed a Merger Implementation Plan which was approved by the Parks and Wildlife Commission on February 9, 2012 and delivered to the Colorado legislature in April of 2012. Since then, the Division has proceeded to implement the merger plan, and will continue to work to create an efficient and comprehensive outdoor recreation agency.

This section provides information concerning the merger that is required in C.R.S. 33-9-101(11)(a) and (b), including realized and planned efficiencies and cost savings, and other effects of the merger.

## Division Summary Facts

### Managing Lands with Partners

Both the former State Parks and DOW had a history of leveraging funding and resources through partnerships, leases and other approaches to maximize outdoor recreation opportunities. As a merged agency, CPW has magnified our recreational impact by providing direct recreational opportunities on over 1.8 million acres of land and water in Colorado, with an additional 344,000 acres managed for wildlife habitat. CPW holds fee title to only 25 percent of the 1.8 million acres, with three out of four acres managed through partnerships and agreements with other owners. This is a very effective and efficient use of limited funds aimed at maximizing recreational opportunities for hunters, anglers, campers and other types of recreation. (See table)

Managing Lands with Partners		
<b>State Park Properties</b>		
State Parks Land acres	172,396	
State Parks Water acres	46,181	
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>218,564</b>	
<b>State Wildlife Areas</b>		
<b>Total acres</b>	<b>684,252</b>	
<b>State Parks Partnerships</b>		
Colorado State Land Board	79,711	36%
Fee title (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)	51,944	23%
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	25,386	12%
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	24,317	11%
Local governments/other	17,609	8%
Irrigation Companies	14,638	7%
U.S. Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management	5,736	3%
<b>Wildlife Properties: Partnering with Agriculture</b>		
Leased acres	663,186	43%
Fee title acres (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)	397,380	26%
Conservation Easement acres	343,641	22%
Public Access Easement acres	133,838	9%
<b>Walk-in Hunting Access Programs</b>		
Small Game Walk-In Access (WIA) acres	273,000	
Big Game Walk-In Access (BGAP) acres	147,013	



### Getting People Outdoors

Collectively, a merged Colorado Parks and Wildlife agency is better equipped to provide comprehensive outdoor recreation opportunities to residents and visitors. Whether it is over 10 million visits to State Parks from Colorado residents or over 11 million activity days spent hunting or fishing each year, CPW engages the Colorado population in extensive outdoor recreation activities every year.

Hunters, anglers, park visitors and wildlife watchers collectively contribute billions of dollars to the Colorado economy, which can be especially important to rural economies. The total economic impact from CPW customers is second only to the ski industry within the tourism sector of Colorado’s economy.

Activity Days and Visitation			
<b>State Park Visitation</b>	<b>12,235,771</b>		
Resident	10,767,478		
Non-Resident	1,468,293		
Return Visits	22 visits/year (average visits within past 12 months)		
Most Popular Activities	Trails, Fishing, Camping, Boating		
<b>Hunting Activity Days*</b>		<b>Fishing Activity Days*</b>	
Resident	1,587,478	9,995,000	
Non-Resident	619,000	471,000	
<b>Hunting Licenses (FY 11-12)</b>		<b>Fishing Licenses (FY 11-12)</b>	
Resident	489,327	689,464	
Non-Resident	86,493	361,257	
* Source: BBC Research and Consulting. 2008. <a href="#">The Economic Impacts of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Watching in Colorado</a>			

### Realized Savings and Efficiencies of Merged Division Resources

In order to achieve more efficient and effective services through economies of scale and use of shared resources, CPW has already taken several steps. Below is a list of realized savings and efficiencies that have already resulted from the merger:

- CPW eliminated 22 permanent positions, resulting in annual savings of \$1.7 million beginning in FY 13-14.
- As a result of HB12-1317, the Parks and Wildlife Commission was reorganized in 2012 to reduce its membership by three commissioners, from fourteen to eleven. This yields further annual savings in per diem, lodging, mileage, printing and associated costs. Merging the Parks Board and the Wildlife Commission also reduced the number of annual meetings from an average of 18 separate Board and Commission meetings to 12 meetings each year. Additionally, legislation has provided more discretion for the CPW Commission to work in a more efficient and cost-effective manner than was previously allowed.
- Prior to the merger, the uniforms in use by over 200 commissioned law enforcement officers in the two agencies were not identical. New uniform standards have been adopted, including clothing, patches, hats, and badges. In some cases this required replacement of existing uniform items. The selection of the new uniform standards, and the implementation of the new standards, was approached with the intent of minimizing costs. For example, shirts were re-patched instead of being replaced and the new standards were



based on existing uniforms to minimize the degree of replacement required. Other minor start-up costs include updating signs at major administrative offices, and updating web-sites and selected publications. One-time transition costs for uniform components, badges and patches amounted to about \$225,000.

- Both the State Parks and the Division of Wildlife, and their respective boards, had distinct rule-making procedures. The merger required that these rule-making processes be reconciled and integrated. During 2012, CPW combined the regulatory processes of the two previous agencies into one process managed by a single Regulations Manager. A consistent and reliable review schedule that allows for regular and timely regulatory changes has been established. In January 2013, the Parks and Wildlife Commission streamlined and combined the two divisions' former rule-making policies. The new process features a reduction from a three-step to a two-step process for most regulatory changes. This includes consent agenda approval for non-controversial and administrative issues and an extension of the former wildlife citizen petition process to parks issues. The new commission process meets or exceeds all Administrative Procedure Act requirements, while streamlining the regulatory process and creating a more efficient system.
- The Division streamlined the Impact Assistance Grant program in 2013. CPW pays impact assistance grants to counties to offset the taxes that would have been paid if the land remained in private sector ownership. Before the merger of Parks and Wildlife, the counties had to apply to Parks separately from Wildlife. The process has now been merged, with a single, new, individualized web grant application page for each county that has most fields pre-populated to make the application process for parks and wildlife grants as efficient for the counties as possible.
- To effectively address invasive aquatic nuisance species (ANS), CPW has built on the framework of the strong ANS strategies of the former divisions and quickly and efficiently created a single ANS program. Training, administration and other functions are now combined into a cohesive program.

### **Planned Savings and Efficiencies of Merged Division Resources**

CPW is actively pursuing plans and opportunities for additional cost savings and efficiencies as a result of the merger. These efforts are underway and will continue to be a focus in the coming years.

- Currently, CPW is reviewing all policies and directives of the former Parks and Wildlife divisions for integration into a single set of policies and directives that reflect the requirements of the new agency. Some directives, such as the Uniform, Media Relations, Colorado Open Records Act and Land Use Commenting have already been completed. Division staff is currently analyzing all others for overlap, duplication, relevance and the potential for modification to better serve the needs of the new agency.
- The Division is analyzing opportunities to consolidate facilities to eliminate duplication while best serving customers.
- An 'Integrated Parks and Wildlife System' for managing the sale of licenses, permits, and registrations will improve customer service (e.g., one-stop shopping) while reducing costs. Prior to the merger, State Parks was planning to invest a considerable sum to implement its own Point of Sale System; such a system was already in place at the Division of Wildlife. That system is being replaced and will handle the sale of both parks and wildlife products. Due to the increased volume of transactions, the cost per transaction for wildlife products will also be reduced from what it would otherwise be. This system will also provide better customer information for CPW, which will provide more opportunities for public outreach.



- Given the complexities of the financial systems of the two former divisions, the merger of the two financial accounting and budget sections is focused on a variety of efficiencies: devising a system for allocating funds from different sources; tracking the use and expenditure of funds from different sources; maintaining a strong internal control environment; complying with statutory direction and requirements to maintain the distinct integrity of funding sources; performing and providing oversight activities; and fulfilling reporting responsibilities. Considerable progress has already been made, with final steps in the implementation taking place in fiscal years 13-14 and 14-15.
- A targeted assessment is planned of CPW properties (Parks and State Wildlife Areas). This will include assessments of properties that could make better parks vs. wildlife areas, sites that could house offices, etc.
- Prior to the merger, each agency maintained a number of like-kind databases (such as law enforcement violation databases, budget databases, etc.). Over time these will be integrated, which should result in reduced maintenance costs.
- Prior to the merger, each agency had its own GIS system. Over time these will be integrated, resulting in improved species management, natural resource/habitat management and natural areas work.
- Cost-sharing of fleet and heavy equipment offers opportunities for cost savings, particularly in areas where parks and state wildlife areas are nearby and each utilize heavy equipment. Efforts to share vehicles and equipment are already underway and will ramp up in coming years.
- A new, merged web site and social media outreach are being developed using current best practices to create a more effective communications platform for outreach and better information service for customers.
- The former Divisions' two successful volunteer programs are being integrated into a coordinated, effective approach. As administration, recruitment and management of volunteers is effectively merged, CPW will be better positioned to expand an already extensive volunteer program (CPW has over 6,500 individuals, contributing nearly \$7.5 million worth of hours equivalent to an additional 163 full time employees).
- Since the merger, former wildlife and parks staff have integrated the review process for trail grant applications. Previously, wildlife staff reviewed and commented on trail grant applications by submitting comments to the State Trails Committee. Now wildlife managers assist with the preliminary review of applications so that CPW provides one recommendation to the State Trails Committee regarding each grant application.
- The former DOW focused on habitat protection and management through a number of programmatic efforts. The former State Parks developed a conscientious stewardship approach toward natural resources. The new agency has expanded its focus to address broad natural resource management issues, building on the best practices of both former agencies.
- The merger is already showing signs that CPW can more effectively understand how changing demographics and other factors affect the delivery of services to our customers across Colorado (and beyond). Rather than two distinct agencies attracting a customer market that overlapped much of the time, CPW can now take an integrated approach that leverages the strengths and expertise of both former agencies.



### **Ongoing or Emerging Issues**

A merged CPW agency is better positioned to deal with a variety of issues and challenges. Through unified leadership, creative thinking and leveraging of resources, CPW and the Commission will approach the biggest issues facing our agency with a stronger and more comprehensive approach.

### **Financial Challenges**

CPW is faced with major financial challenges including declining revenue from license sales, the loss of state parks general or severance tax funds and budget shortfalls in the main Wildlife Cash fund. For this reason, Financial Sustainability is a major priority for the merged agency (see p. 7-8). To help address this challenge, CPW is in the process of developing financial plans for both parks and wildlife.

A significant result of the merger is that a unified financial strategy for CPW is emerging. With improved transparency of financial reporting and detailed analyses and projections of agency revenue streams, the agency can better understand and address its financial needs, against the context of changing social, economic and environmental patterns. These and other steps are aiming CPW toward financial stability and sustainability.

### **Participation in Outdoor Recreation**

Overall, participation in outdoor recreation is exceptional in Colorado, with about 94 percent of Coloradans participating in different types of outdoor recreation. However, there are several concerning trends, such as declining interest from youth and declining or stagnant hunter and angler participation rates. The merged CPW is now well-positioned to address some of these challenges head-on.

Early on, CPW staff recognized the overlap between activities such as fishing and state park visitation. What had been a long-standing cooperative partnership to stock fish in state park reservoirs is evolving into a stronger strategic vision. Even before the merger officially started in July 2011, CPW's marketing and graphics staff developed brochures for fishing and hunting in State Parks and began distributing those to the public. About 25 percent of people visit state parks to fish<sup>8</sup>, and about 35 percent of anglers in Colorado fish on state parks.<sup>9</sup> These synergies position CPW to take the appropriate steps that will build both park visitation and fishing license sales. As an effort to begin capitalizing on such synergies, CPW has developed the *2013 Increasing Angling, Hunting and Park Visitation Long-Term Strategy* that outlines strategies to drive positive, effective improvements for three key CPW revenue streams, while providing strong focus on the delivery of quality customer service and satisfaction.

CPW also hopes to reach youth that are increasingly staying indoors or focused on electronic media. As mentioned in one of the main CPW strategic priorities, CPW aims to provide accessible and meaningful recreational and educational opportunities to families and youth (see p. 5-6). Recognizing that youth and families are the future CPW customer base, CPW will continue to work closely with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and other partners to effectively and successfully reach a high-priority segment of Colorado's population. GOCO lists "youth, families and the

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<sup>8</sup> Corona Research. 2009a. *Colorado State Parks 2008/2009 Marketing Assessment Executive Summary of Findings and Recommendations*.

<sup>9</sup> Colorado Parks and Wildlife. 2012. "2012 Colorado Angler Survey Report" 64 pages.



outdoors” as one of its top strategic priorities in the *2010 Great Outdoors Colorado Strategic Plan*. Because of our aligned priorities, CPW is committed to investing GOCO funds to reach youth and families. Going forward, CPW is positioned to develop strategies that are congruent with GOCO’s that include visiting parks, trail recreation, watchable wildlife, fishing and other recreation.

### **Environmental Challenges**

The challenges presented by environmental changes are not specific to the merger, but these issues continue to be a main focus of the merged agency. Drought, wildfires, insect outbreaks and invasive species present on-going challenges for a resource management agency. Coupled with a growing population and conversion of habitats through development, CPW’s role in wildlife management and natural resource stewardship takes on great importance.

To address these environmental challenges, CPW is taking a proactive approach to wildlife management, habitat conservation and natural resource stewardship. As a major water rights owner with expertise on wildlife and recreation, CPW will be a contributor to the Colorado Water Plan. This will allow for these wildlife and recreational concerns to be incorporated into statewide water planning. Additionally, CPW has merged what used to be separate aquatic nuisance species programs to more efficiently monitor and prevent the spread of these damaging invaders. To address declining mule deer herds, CPW is developing a mule deer strategy that incorporates extensive input from stakeholders and wildlife managers. To better implement landscape-scale conservation planning, CPW is also proactively developing ‘crucial habitat’ mapping that can inform development plans and conservation efforts statewide. Finally, CPW has recently been appointed as a member of the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s Noxious Weed Advisory Council, which will allow CPW to be at the forefront of managing a primary threat to state lands, wildlife habitat and recreation. All of these activities of the merged CPW will work toward one of the primary strategic priorities of the merged agency (see p. 6-7).