

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

# Strategic Plan

ADOPTED NOVEMBER 2015





# Acknowledgements

Development of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan was made possible with input and support of the public, key stakeholders and partners (especially Great Outdoors Colorado), the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission), the Department of Natural Resources, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff.

## Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission

Appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate for four-year terms, the eleven members of the Commission consist of citizens representing Colorado's Agriculture, Parks/Nonconsumptive Wildlife Users, Sportspersons/Outfitters, and two Members at Large. The Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources and the Commissioner of Agriculture also serve on the Commission as ex-officio members. The Commission sets regulations and policies for Colorado's parks and wildlife programs and was actively involved throughout the strategic plan process.

## Colorado Parks and Wildlife Leadership Team and Staff

Members of CPW's Leadership Team were involved at key junctures in the strategic planning process and assisted in public workshops, strategic plan visioning sessions, and overall development of the plan.

The Policy and Planning Unit, which facilitated the development of this plan, would also like to thank all the CPW staff who provided input and advice. Staff assisted with workshops and provided expertise to inform the drafting of objectives, strategies, and benchmarks for success. Their support made the development of the strategic plan possible.



## CPW Commission

Michelle Zimmerman, *Chair*  
Marvin McDaniel, *Vice-Chair*  
James Vigil, *Secretary*  
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# Executive Summary

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan (Plan) outlines Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) mission, vision statement, goals, and objectives. This Plan presents a roadmap for and understanding of where CPW is headed in the future. The Plan was developed with input from the public, stakeholders, partners (e.g., GOCO), the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission), and CPW staff.

The Plan summarizes several of the pertinent issues that CPW will face in the future. Changes in these include, but are not limited to, a growing population, changes in demographics, and recreation trends and preferences. To develop the Plan, a review of existing data on demographic trends, recreation trends and customer satisfaction was completed. CPW also conducted statewide engagement to gather input from the general public, stakeholders, the Commission, and staff regarding what these groups desire as the future direction of the agency.

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

**Goal I | Conserve wildlife and habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems.**

**Goal II | Manage state parks for world class outdoor recreation.**

**Goal III | Achieve and maintain financial sustainability.**

**Goal IV | Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers.**

**Goal V | Increase awareness and trust for CPW.**

**Goal VI | Connect people to Colorado's outdoors.**

The Plan is high-level and intended to be a living document, one that will be updated as needed. The goals, objectives and strategies are also high-level and intended to guide the creation and execution of operation and implementation plans. Operation plans will be reviewed and updated by staff every three to five years and implementation plans will be prepared annually.



# Introduction

On June 26, 2011, Governor Hickenlooper signed into law Senate Bill 11-208 which merged the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Division of Wildlife to create Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The purpose of this merger was to find efficiencies, ensure greater long-term financial viability, and improve opportunities for outdoor recreation in Colorado.<sup>1</sup>

CPW is funded primarily through user fees, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants, and federal and state grants and does not receive general tax dollars. User fees account for a majority of CPW's total revenue. CPW manages 42 state parks that encompass 220,385 acres as well as 346 state wildlife areas (678,949 acres). During fiscal year 2013/2014, state parks had 11,948,406 visitors and CPW sold 476,626 hunting licenses, 1,008,245 fishing licenses, and 77,200 combination (hunting and fishing) licenses. That same year, volunteers donated 298,150 hours of service in education and stewardship activities. State parks and other CPW properties provide over 700 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails, and boating opportunities are available at 32 parks. In addition, CPW also provides leadership in a variety of statewide outdoor recreation and natural resource programs on public and private property, including the Colorado State Recreational Trails, Boating Safety, and the Colorado Natural Area Programs.

Accounting for an estimated \$34.5 billion annually in total economic impact, wildlife and outdoor recreation represent important parts of Colorado's heritage, quality of life, and economy. Hunting, angling, wildlife viewing, and state park visitation contribute roughly \$6.1 billion annually in economic effects statewide.<sup>2</sup> CPW has statutory and regulatory authority for over 960 native species, including mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, and crustaceans. CPW manages the largest elk herd in North America, with an estimated population of 264,000 animals. The agency also manages a variety of other species for hunting and trapping, including nine other big game species and 28 small game species. More than 90 million sport fish are hatched and stocked into Colorado waters annually by CPW's 19 state fish hatcheries and rearing units. Coloradans have fishing access to over 2,000 natural lakes, 800 reservoirs, and 9,500 miles of streams. CPW is also charged with conservation of "nongame" wildlife, listed species and species of greatest conservation need.<sup>3</sup> In addition, CPW seeks to increase the public's understanding of and appreciation for the outdoors to enhance co-existence with our natural resources.



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

<sup>2</sup> Southwick Associates. 2103. "The Economic Contributions of Outdoor Recreation in Colorado: A regional and county-level analysis."

<sup>3</sup> Species of Greatest Conservation Need are those identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan and listed as a federal candidate, threatened or endangered species under the ESA; Classified as state endangered or threatened species, or species of special concern; Global ranking scores of G1, G2 or G3 by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program; Identified as conservation priorities through a range-wide status assessment or assessment of large taxonomic divisions; Assigned state ranking scores of S1 or S2 and a global ranking score of G4 by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.

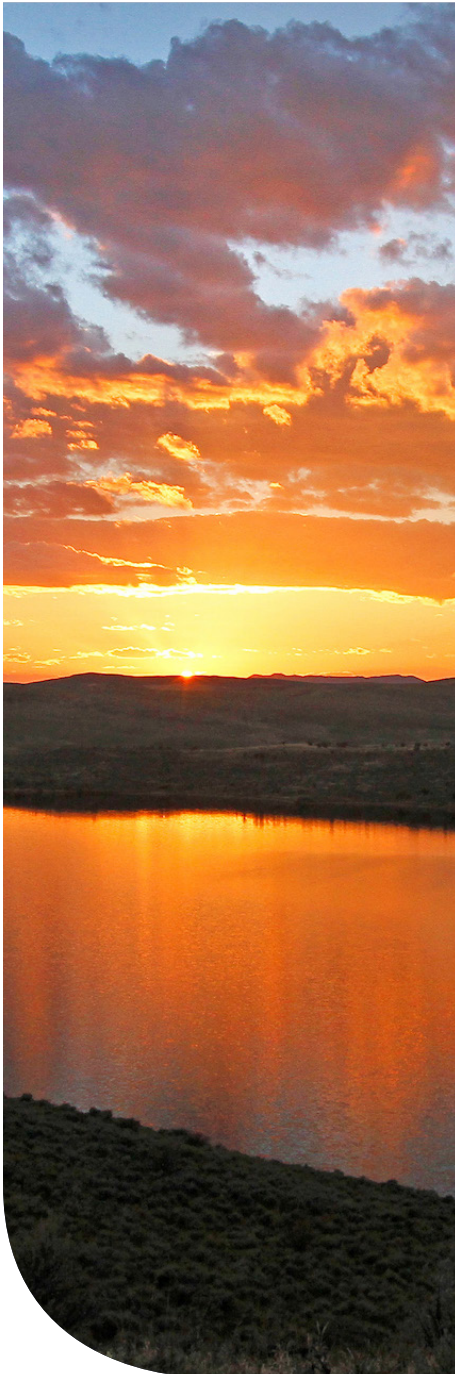
# Mission

*“To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks 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 (12) (b)).

# Vision

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



## Management Principles

Management principles are the core values and beliefs that guide CPW in achieving its mission and making decisions at all levels of the organization.

### Leadership

- Provide leadership to conserve Colorado’s outdoor heritage, economic future, and quality of life.

### Public Trust and Accountability

- Prioritize public trust and accountability.

### Science-Based Management Decisions

- Be a national leader in biological and natural resource sciences. Use science to inform management decisions.

### Stewardship

- Be stewards of CPW properties, land, and water.
- Sustain habitat for healthy, abundant, and diverse wildlife populations while supporting wildlife-related uses.

### Communities

- Serve communities throughout Colorado, recognizing the value parks and wildlife bring to local economies and quality of life.

### Partnerships

- Build and maintain partnerships that enhance capacity to deliver CPW’s mission.

### Customer Service

- Provide excellent service to the public in all interactions.

### Communication

- Provide interpretive programs and environmental education to enhance the public’s role as stewards, promote outdoor recreation, and raise awareness for the importance of wildlife management.

### Valued Staff

- Support a culture of collaboration, innovation, and commitment to the agency’s mission and assist employees to reach their full potential.

### Diversity

- Ensure CPW programs and workforce reflects Colorado’s diverse demographics.

# Core Competencies

The core competencies listed below are a set of essential functions where CPW excels. These functions aid CPW in achieving its mission.

## Natural Resource and Recreation Management

- Manage wildlife, lands, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.
- Protect and enhance habitat and water for the benefit of wildlife and citizens.
- Provide science and biological expertise.
- Supply expertise in trail construction and maintenance.

## Public Service and Outreach

- Provide outdoor opportunities for Colorado's diverse population.
- Provide essential natural resource and outdoor recreation education.
- Represent Colorado's parks and wildlife values at state and national levels.
- Maintain and build a statewide network of volunteers focused on natural resource stewardship and education.
- Provide exceptional customer service.

## Safety and Security

- Provide appropriate law enforcement in parks, in state wildlife areas, on waterways, and in support of local communities when necessary or requested.
- Regulate wildlife, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.
- Maintain public safety and assist in search and rescue efforts.

## Positive Economic Impacts

- Support and diversify the economic base of communities by providing outdoor recreation opportunities, funding for local projects, and statewide staff expertise.

# Planning Process

The Plan presents a vision for where CPW is headed in the future, developed through a combination of the following key steps:

## Collect, Review, and Synthesize Data and Existing Information

The best available data on state trends, user-group preferences, natural resources, and outdoor recreation (e.g., hunting, angling, park visitation) was analyzed and considered early in the planning process. This data included but was not limited to the 2014 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, CPW's 2013 Customer and Market Trends Report, CPW's Path Forward, and the 2014 GOCO strategic planning effort.

## Parks and Wildlife Commission

Commissioners were integral to the formulation of the Plan. Four strategic planning workshops were held with Commissioners to develop visioning and drafting of goals and objectives. The Commission approved the planning approach and provided direction throughout the process.

## Public and Staff Input

Input from stakeholders, the general public, and staff were also essential in formulating CPW's strategic direction. CPW held public and staff workshops across the state, collected thousands of comments online and in person, and hosted a telephone town hall to gather feedback to inform the development of the Plan.



# Summary of Statewide Engagement

In February 2015, CPW initiated a two-month statewide engagement process. Outcomes from the public and staff engagement reflected many of the findings cited in CPW's *Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections* report. Public preferences for natural resources and recreation priorities show Coloradans value state parks, opportunities for wildlife viewing, trail-based activities, preserving open lands and habitat, and maintaining access for recreation. The *Public and Staff Engagement Report* provides more detail regarding the results of the statewide engagement effort.

On August 14, 2015, CPW released the draft 2015 CPW Strategic Plan for public review. A 30-day comment period followed and closed on September 14, 2015. During this period, CPW hosted four public open houses across the state where citizens were invited to talk directly with staff about the draft plan and planning process. Comment forms were available at open houses and an online comment form was available on the CPW website for the entire comment period. CPW promoted the draft plan and comment period through the website homepage, email announcements to the CPW Insider list, and a strategic plan email list comprised of interested citizens and stakeholders. CPW also released local and statewide press announcements and posted announcements on social media.

## Issues and Trends

CPW researched trends and projections for Colorado's demographics and outdoor recreation that will impact the landscape within which the agency works. This information informed the agency's strategic priorities for the future by providing a framework for understanding the larger context of CPW's working environment. An overview is presented in the *Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections* report.

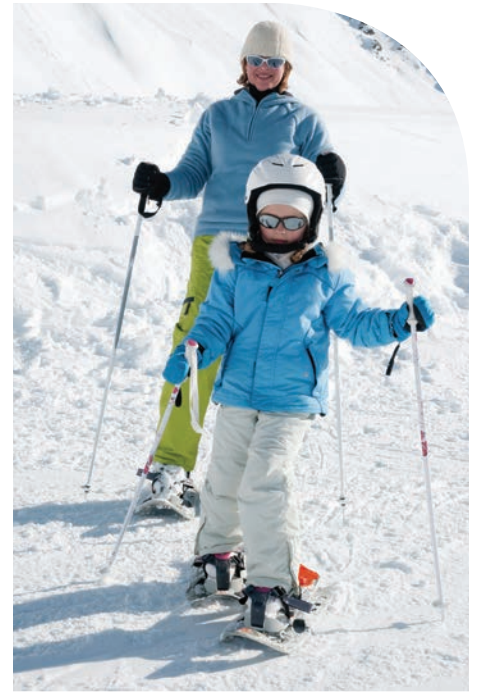
## Demographics

Colorado's population is forecasted to grow by more than 40 percent between 2015 and 2040, reaching nearly 8 million residents in the next 25 years. Seventy-five percent of growth is expected to occur on the Front Range.<sup>4</sup> In 2000, 25 percent of the state's population was non-white; in 2040, almost half of Coloradans will be non-white. Hispanics are the largest minority group in the state and are projected to make up one-third of the population by 2040.<sup>5</sup>

## Outdoor Recreation

The top reasons Coloradans choose to live here are the state's clean environment, access to public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities, and residents' ability to maintain a healthy outdoor lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> Over 80 percent of Coloradans participate in trail-related activities, making these the most popular forms of outdoor recreation.<sup>7</sup>

Colorado State Parks visitation has generally been increasing over the last 10 to 15 years, with about 12 million visits each year for the past seven years. Fishing is the fourth most popular activity by proportion of Coloradans' participation.<sup>8</sup> After reaching a low in 2000, participation in angling has been increasing. The sale of hunting licenses continues on a general decline since a high in 1998, although the demand for big game hunting licenses continues to exceed supply.



<sup>4</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. "2010 Population and Percent Change Colorado Counties - Total Population."

<sup>5</sup> Colorado State Demography Office. 2010. "Population by Race and Hispanic Origin." It should also be noted that while the Hispanic population is projected to make up 32.7 percent of Colorado's population in 2040 up from 17.1 percent in 2000; the Asian/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic population is projected to grow at a faster rate during this period making up 2.6 percent of the population in 2000 and is projected to make up 6.5 percent of Colorado's population in 2040.

<sup>6</sup> Colorado College. 2015. *Conservation in the West Poll*.

<sup>7</sup> CPW. 2014. *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.

<sup>8</sup> CPW. 2013. *Outdoor Recreation Participation Public Survey Summary Report*. Research, Planning and Policy Unit, June 2013.



# GOAL I | Conserve wildlife and habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems.

Ensure that fish and wildlife populations persist through use of science, habitat preservation, harvest, and other management tools.

## Objective A | Manage sustainable populations of game and nongame species to support fishing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities.

### Strategies

1. Develop, implement, and update species management plans and strategies.
2. Enforce CPW regulations, state statutes and federal laws.
3. Assess hatchery output and adjust when necessary.

## Objective B | Preserve and enhance diverse habitat.

### Strategies

4. Identify priority habitats for conservation.
5. Collaborate with government, private, and nonprofit entities to fund landscape-scale habitat protection.
6. Attempt to ensure the needs of wildlife and habitat are addressed in federal, state, and local planning processes and land use decisions.
7. Manage invasive species to reduce impacts on habitat.

## Objective C | Manage and monitor species of greatest conservation need while working with partners to maintain viable populations.

### Strategies

8. Collaborate with partners to advance State Wildlife Action Plan priorities.
9. Maintain viable populations through species conservation planning.
10. Protect rare plant species and unique natural areas.

## Objective D | Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations.

### Strategies

11. Use the statewide water plan to guide wildlife and recreation management activities.
12. Pursue partnerships and agreements to enhance in-stream flows, protect reservoir levels, and influence water management activities.
13. Maintain existing water supplies and when appropriate, ensure that proposed new water supplies meet wildlife and recreation objectives.
14. Monitor water quality.
15. Advocate for water quality and quantities to conserve aquatic resources and provide for recreation.

## Objective E | Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions.

### Strategies

16. Produce biological and social science research to improve knowledge and management of wildlife and habitats.
17. Identify, monitor, and assess current aquatic and terrestrial wildlife threats including disease.
18. Maintain robust monitoring to inform species management and planning.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. Wildlife populations meet agency objectives, using current data.
2. Increase water agreements that protect or enhance reservoir levels and in-stream flows.
3. Additional priority habitats are enhanced and conserved.
4. Produce scientifically-based research to inform management.
5. Sportsmen and women are satisfied with their hunting, fishing, and trapping experiences.



# GOAL II | Manage state parks for world class outdoor recreation.

Offer recreation opportunities for Colorado's growing and diverse population while showcasing the state's wealth of outdoor resources.

## Objective A | Manage facilities and outdoor recreation amenities within state parks to provide positive experiences for Coloradans and visitors.

### Strategies

1. Develop and implement parks management and maintenance plans.
2. Develop and implement park stewardship plans to enhance natural resources at state parks.
3. Monitor facility maintenance needs to maintain a baseline of quality standards.
4. Seek and allocate resources for deferred and preventative maintenance.
5. Enforce CPW regulations, state statutes, and federal laws.

## Objective B | Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks.

### Strategies

6. Use assessment tools to ensure recreation opportunities offered are in line with public demand.
7. Expand state parks based on financial viability and needs assessments.
8. Seek new funding to invest in recreational opportunities and facility enhancement.
9. Identify partnerships for acquisition or expansion of properties.

## Objective C | Market the special qualities of Colorado's state parks.

### Strategies

10. Promote unique qualities of individual state parks.
11. Conduct targeted media campaigns to highlight specific state parks and the broader benefits of outdoor recreation.
12. Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products.
13. Partner on community and statewide outdoor recreation initiatives.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. All state parks create and adhere to regular maintenance plans.
2. Agency-wide guidelines for acquisition of new parks or expansion of existing parks have been developed.
3. Annual state parks visitation is on an increasing trend.
4. Preserve high visitor satisfaction with state parks and ensure the natural values of parks are maintained.



# GOAL III | Achieve and maintain financial sustainability.

Be efficient and effective in the use of existing revenue and identify new sources of revenue needed to accomplish CPW's mission.

## Objective A | Identify potential new and broader sources of funding.

### Strategies

1. Implement Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fiscal recommendations.
2. Investigate fiscally sound and sustainable alternative income sources.
3. Garner support from public, private, and government entities on financial sustainability initiatives.
4. Improve purchasing and donation processes.

## Objective B | Maintain existing sources of funding.

### Strategies

5. Maintain and increase participation in fee-based outdoor recreation.
6. Evaluate and improve current products and services to increase customer base.
7. Work with DNR and the General Assembly to ensure revenue matches rising costs.

## Objective C | Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly.

### Strategies

8. Regularly report program outcomes and resource needs.
9. Increase program efficiencies and share outcomes with staff and public.
10. Consider financial implications when making agency decisions.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. Alternative sources of revenue are identified and evaluated.
2. Demonstrate improvements in programmatic efficiencies.
3. Revenue sources match current and predicted needs.
4. Document the value of outside funding, partnerships, and volunteers to recreation and wildlife.



# GOAL IV | Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers.

Recruit, train, retain, and support talented, inspired and committed personnel and volunteers.

## Objective A | Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel.

### Strategies

1. Use mentoring and succession planning for employee development.
2. Share knowledge, ideas, and feedback through multiple channels.

## Objective B | Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce.

### Strategies

3. Provide all personnel with relevant, regular, and consistent training and career development programs.
4. Recruit new, diverse staff through multiple channels.

## Objective C | Attract inspired staff and volunteers committed to CPW's mission.

### Strategies

5. Cooperate with the DNR and the Department of Personnel and Administration to ensure fair and equitable compensation that is commensurate with responsibility and expertise.
6. Ensure employees are prepared with the appropriate skills for their positions.
7. Provide clear expectations.
8. Support decision-making at appropriate agency level.
9. Improve horizontal and vertical communication channels.
10. Recruit, retain, and recognize volunteers to accomplish mission-critical work.
11. Foster partnerships with volunteer organizations, agencies, and Friends groups to recruit new volunteers.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. Attract and retain highly qualified personnel.
2. Create succession planning and mentoring programs.
3. Provide training to maintain job skills and encourage professional growth.
4. Report and analyze annual recruitment efforts.
5. Improve internal CPW communication.
6. The number of volunteer hours dedicated to CPW increases.



# GOAL V | Increase awareness and trust for CPW.

Increase transparency, awareness, and trust for CPW's mission and core services.

## Objective A | Communicate information about CPW's mission, funding and key programs.

### Strategies

1. Provide information to the public and decision makers in an understandable format.
2. Use a communication plan; identify thematic needs and opportunities to convey information to the public.
3. Provide access to programmatic information.
4. Use consistent messaging regarding mission, services, and funding.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. Use and evaluate communication plan to inform agency outreach.
2. Outreach strategies target population's interests and needs.
3. Future revenue projections and needs are clearly communicated through multiple channels.

## Objective B | Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement.

### Strategies

5. Seek public comment, questions, and suggestions.
6. Assess public interest in CPW and mission-related issues.
7. Use multiple avenues and technologies to collect information.

## Objective C | Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management.

### Strategies

1. Communicate the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping as wildlife management tools.
2. Convey the benefits of wildlife management for sustainable outdoor recreation.



# GOAL VI | Connect people to Colorado's outdoors.

Increase awareness and participation in outdoor recreation including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and trail-based activities. This includes connecting more people to Colorado's outdoors by providing diverse outdoor recreation and educational experiences.

## Objective A | Broaden the access and variety of recreation opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors.

### Strategies

1. Assess the interests of recreation users and expand opportunities to meet interest.
2. Increase understanding and awareness for how outdoor recreation impacts natural resources.
3. Support safe, responsible, and accessible outdoor recreation.
4. Offer educational, interpretive programs, and hands-on training for new or basic outdoor skills.
5. Use marketing to increase awareness of recreational opportunities.
6. Foster partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit entities to introduce new users to outdoor recreation activities.

### Benchmarks for success:

1. An assessment of existing conditions, recreation interests, and opportunities informs agency work.
2. Outreach programs are evaluated statewide.
3. A marketing plan guides communication regarding programs.
4. Technology allows CPW to connect with more customers.

## Objective B | Provide facilities, infrastructure, and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences.

### Strategies

7. Maintain existing facilities and infrastructure.
8. Explore expanding recreational opportunities on parks and wildlife properties consistent with responsible natural resource management.
9. Use customer research and capital infrastructure plans to inform the expansion of facilities.



# GOAL VI continued | Connect people to Colorado's outdoors.

Increase awareness and participation in outdoor recreation including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and trail-based activities. This includes connecting more people to Colorado's outdoors by providing diverse outdoor recreation and educational experiences.

## Objective C | Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities.

### Strategies

10. Recognize contributions of recreational partners.
11. Organize regular opportunities to network and learn from each other.
12. Provide print and web resources.

## Objective D | Promote the value of CPW's mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW's volunteer network, and inspire stewardship.

### Strategies

13. Collaborate with partners to enhance stewardship of natural resources on public and private lands.
14. Offer hands-on volunteer projects and communicate the value of volunteers and stewardship to the public.
15. Create and implement a comprehensive multi-lingual marketing plan.
16. Expand use of customer-friendly technologies.
17. Enhance partnerships to broaden outreach and connect new users to the outdoors.

## Objective E | Become familiar with the needs, interests, and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation.

### Strategies

18. Conduct and regularly update market surveys.
19. Identify and address barriers to participation in outdoor recreation.
20. Identify demographic trends and target non-participating populations.
21. Conduct outreach and post recreation surveys





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