

To: Members of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission

From: Upstream Consulting

Re: Outreach Services for Keep Colorado Wild Pass Summary Report

Date: August 24, 2022

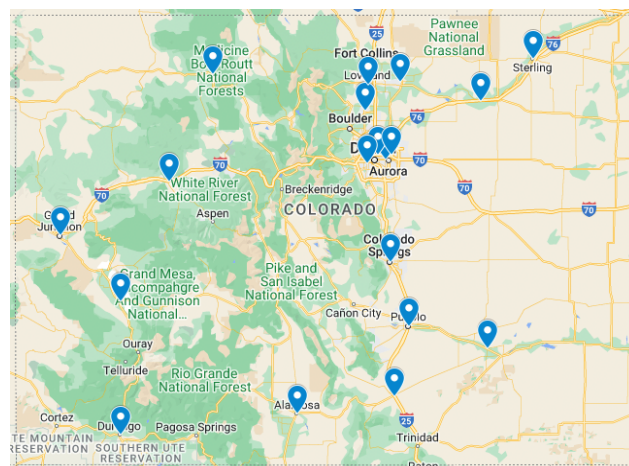
Introduction:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife hired Upstream Consulting to conduct a public outreach campaign to educate and gather information from Colorado residents and stakeholders, with an emphasis on disproportionately impacted communities, on the new Keep Colorado Wild Pass. We were tasked to seek input on the new Keep Colorado Wild Pass, how to price an income-eligible version of the pass and the documentation needed to prove eligibility and strategies to promote the pass once it's implemented. Since May 2022, our team has planned and conducted focus groups around Colorado in person and virtually, and held a stakeholder meeting, while also collecting responses on a comment form. This memorandum will provide a brief summary of the qualitative and quantitative data collected over the last couple of months, key takeaways, and recommendations for future outreach, followed by a presentation to the commission at the September Commission meeting.

Summary of our approach:

Planning: After our initial meetings with the CPW staff, we began planning our focus group roadshow and deciding how to collect information from disproportionately impacted Colorado residents with a focus on underserved and BIPOC communities, and low-income households. We chose locations close to Colorado state parks and areas with diverse populations, including race and ethnicity, income levels, and age. The majority of our venues were either libraries or family resource centers, locations where people often frequent to access a variety of services and resources. These venues are generally accessible and frequented by individuals from disproportionately impacted communities, so we knew these would be safe spaces for residents to meet with us. We scheduled the focus groups to be offered at different times and days and announced the schedule with at least thirty days' notice, in accordance with CRS 24-4-109 via HB21-1266 "Environmental Justice Act."

Map of Focus Groups Conducted Around Colorado





Promotion: We announced the roadshow via press release (in English and Spanish) through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife marketing department and provided both English and Spanish calendars, including links to register for each focus group. In appreciation for the effort and time for participation in these focus groups, we included in the promotion that there would be a \$25 gift card for each person in attendance. Originally we planned on giving gas or grocery gift cards, but due to the varieties of gas stations and grocery store options around the state, we opted for Visa gift cards. The \$25 value for gift cards was chosen after considering feedback our team has received through other work from communities we sought to engage. We designed social media graphics for organizations, local elected officials and community influencers to promote the focus groups and developed [social media toolkits](#) (in English and Spanish) to ensure they were using CPW-approved messaging.

Data Collection: In collaboration with CPW staff, we created a comment form in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) to ask focus group participants and non-participants to provide feedback, modeling some of the demographic questions from previous CPW data collection tools. We then designed the focus group format to reflect the questions in the comment form while encouraging a deeper discussion. Each focus group included an introduction to Colorado Parks and Wildlife and more information on the Keep Colorado Wild Pass. Each focus group had a local CPW staff member scheduled to attend and provide additional information specific to the region. We collected their demographics at the beginning of each focus group. Upstream recorded all focus groups over zoom, and had a staff person attending virtually to take notes, so that the in-person facilitators could stay engaged in the conversation.

To make the focus group environment a comfortable and inviting space for all participants, we provided healthy snacks or meals depending on the timing of the focus groups. Because we were required to offer a mix of times and days, outlined in CRS 24-4-109 via HB21-1266 “Environmental Justice Act”, we also included child-friendly snacks and welcomed participants to bring their children or anyone they care for to the focus groups to remove that barrier. We provided coloring sheets from CPW and crayons for children to engage with during focus group meetings. Those who brought their children added a special perspective to the conversation as they would refer to the family dynamic they have by pointing to their children in the focus group and say “our family.”

Outreach: Our team at Upstream Consulting is a diverse group of consultants who have insight and access to different communities around the state. Elizabet Garcia helped with outreach to the Latino community and attended every focus group so that she could provide bilingual facilitation when needed. Bianca Emerson helped outreach to the African American community and the Faith community. Val Nosler Beck, a Colorado municipal elected official, brings in a business aspect and an understanding of local communities around the state. Anna Michaels-Boffy, a social worker, has strong connections to the family resource centers around the state and utilizes her relationships with them to engage them and the people they serve.



We focused on reaching people in communities who do not often interact with state parks as we believe this pass aims to engage Coloradans who were excluded from enjoying Colorado's parks due to barriers in the pass price. We aimed to have 5-10 individuals attend each group to have an intimate and robust conversation about the Keep Colorado Wild Pass and provide feedback on the price point and logistics around the income-eligible option. Since several of our groups were located at family resource centers, we leaned on their staff to identify people who would be assets to the focus group discussion. Oftentimes family resource staff participated as well and provided invaluable perspectives. We invited those who were unable to attend in-person focus groups but indicated an interest in participating to a virtual meeting and also sent them the comment form so that they could still have their perspectives included in this campaign. At the time of this memo, we are still collecting data through the comment form survey from around the state to gather more information. We are making sure that communities we could not reach during our focus groups around the state still have a chance to be heard.

Through our outreach efforts, we learned that each community we were planning to visit is unique in how they interact with state parks and also who their trusted resources are when learning about or participating in a focus group type of engagement. We reached out at least 30 days in advance and posted on social media, specifically Facebook, about all the focus groups taking place. In the Denver Metro Area, we were able to coalesce focus groups by reaching out to our own networks. Because of the current economy, we wanted to be mindful not to overly advertise the incentive offered, so we had to do individual outreach to each participant and advertise through word of mouth and flyers to churches, community organizations and at community health centers. Since this was not a town hall or community meeting, we used caution in widely advertising the focus groups.

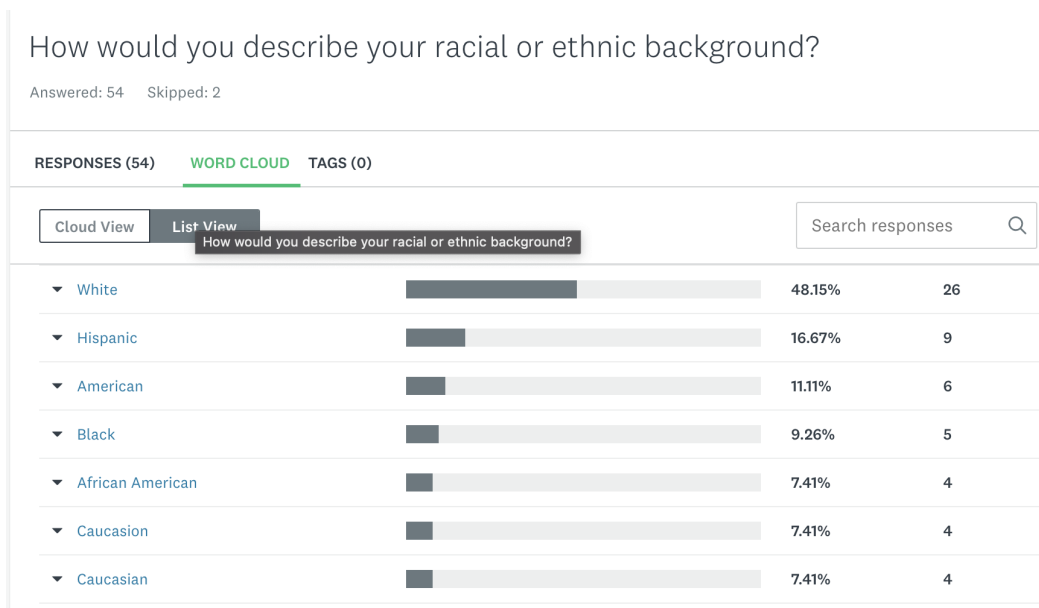
On the Eastern Plains, family resource centers are the pulse of many of the communities we visited. Even though this outreach was happening during the height of the agricultural busy season, the family resource centers helped us connect with residents in their communities. We also contacted local elected officials like county commissioners and town and city officials. Local parks and recreation departments often posted our marketing materials on their website pages. We also contacted local businesses with active social media followings to help promote the focus groups. Because many of the communities on the Eastern Plains frequent their state parks regularly, engagement and participation were strong despite the busy time of year.

In the mountains and Western Slope, we also faced challenges with participation despite efforts to engage local community leaders. For example, we worked to promote a focus group in Glenwood Springs with the community organization Voces Unidas. 20 people signed up to attend the focus group, with eight people confirming they would be in attendance shortly before the meeting. Unfortunately, on the day of the focus group, only three people attended. We also had challenges with recruitment for focus groups in other high tourism towns like Steamboat Springs and Durango. One possible reason for the challenges in recruiting participants is that summer is a busier time of year in high tourism towns when potential participants regularly work or recreate outdoors. Although some focus groups in the region



were poorly attended, other meetings, such as in Grand Junction, were well attended because of the strong support and participation from family resource centers and other organizations.

The following graphic depicts how Upstream allowed focus group participants to self identify their race and/or ethnicity. Participants could also choose to leave this blank and oftentimes chose to do so or not complete the survey entirely. In an effort to be the most inclusive, Upstream did not require participants in the focus groups to share their demographic information. We heard from our team that does work in the Latino community and the African American community that oftentimes these community members do not want to share this information due to fears of repercussions because of legal status, etc. As seen in the graphic below, participants identified in different ways and we gave them the space to do so.



Finally, we believe that hearing the perspectives of both the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute tribes is an important piece of this outreach, especially given the subject of public land access. An invitation to meet with both tribes was sent by Department of Natural Resources Executive Director Dan Gibbs. As of today, we have not received a response. We encourage CPW to continue trying to engage these communities in the coming months.

Summary of our findings:

The main takeaways from the focus groups and comment form are:

Regarding the Keep Colorado Wild Pass:

- Coloradans are generally pleased with the new \$29 Keep Colorado Wild Pass.
- There are questions about how they will access the \$29 KCW pass for the year if they don't have to register until later in the year.



- Participants were curious if the reduced price would impact the quality of the parks.
- The pass pays for itself if you go 2-3 times per year and allows people to go to multiple parks.

Regarding the income-eligible discounted pass:

- For those who can't afford \$29 and meet income eligibility, \$14 seems reasonable, however many were concerned that an even more reduced price would impact the quality of the parks.
- For people who cannot afford \$14, there was interest in making free pass options available which could include the library backpack program, nonprofits buying passes for people, etc.
- It's difficult for people to get to CPW offices or visitor centers. If they don't have reliable transportation, they probably won't be registering a vehicle either.
- Ask for documentation that already shows they are income-eligible including WIC, TANF, LEAP.
- People are used to showing documentation to receive reduced prices of services.
- Many people do not have internet access to purchase CPW products online.

Communication about the pass:

- Make it very clear that there is an opt-out option and what it means to opt-in. People might opt-in and not know what they're paying for or that they now have access to state parks.
- Have a map in a handout accessible for people to see if they live close to a state park.
- Articulate the benefits of the pass.

Marketing materials:

- Include images of people of different races, ages, etc.
- Promote the pass in local newspapers, social media, schools, family resource centers, religious hubs.
- Use community groups to help promote the pass by mailing them boxes of materials.

Below are some direct quotes from our focus groups:

Would you opt in/out of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass?

Pros:

- "If you go 2-3 times a month, it would make out great for everyone. But for someone who goes only one time, it's not worth it, but that means they just have to get out more. The more you get out, the more you see."
- "I think it's a great idea. I love to support wildlife and nature. All about that now. I think it's a very good price for the year. It's good."
- "I think it would be great - we go to parks. It gets expensive. You can make a weekend or vacation time out of it. You don't have to go and buy another one the next day."
- "It will be beneficial to my family."
- "Definitely opt in - I am all about convenience, I am already in the system, and I can avoid a long line, I think it's a matter of convenience. It's right there for you!"

- “This will help preserve the park system. Not everyone has \$29, but you can’t even go out for breakfast for that much.”
- “I’m very, very likely to opt-in because you don’t have to think about it. God knows there are lines to get into these parks, so it makes it easy.”
- “We haven’t gone out much this week because we don’t even have the extra money for gas, snacks for the kids, ice, etc., but \$29 is 3 trips out there, but we can go out all year long. We would go out there all day long.”
- “Our pool is closed - it’s broken - we need this \$29 pass right now because we’ll go out to the lake, the kids will love it.”
- “If I wanted to take my kids to the pool like with all my family that’s almost \$100 for all 9 of us to go - we could have this pass and go out to the swim beach at the lake all summer if we had this pass - its way cheaper than the pool”
- “I like to walk around in town and would use the state park to walk around if I had this pass”

Con:

- “I think a lot of people won’t do it - we’re all here because we like going out to the lake.”
- “It would be good to access two vehicles - many of us have big families and have to take 2 cars. Sometimes a car is in the shop or the field, and if you can’t use the car, then you can’t use the pass.”
 - **NOTE:** It will be important for CPW to inform Coloradans about the ability to use their proof of holding a Keep Colorado Wild pass (such as through the My CPW app) or to purchase a non-motor vehicle pass to get into parks without a car. Much of the information regarding KCW is that the pass is tied to the car’s registration and there might be confusion that if someone doesn’t have their car, they will not be able to get in.
- “Gets expensive if there is more than one car. You should make it transferable.”
- “If people don’t have a car to register they wont get one, there are people in my family like that.”
 - **NOTE:** it will be important to promote the walk-in only KCW pass so Coloradans know they can receive a KCW pass even if they don’t have a car.

Income eligibility:

- “If it’s cheaper, you’ll bring a lot more people in, but I think it would be better for all parties if you lower the cost.”
- “If you could visit and go to any park ranger - many people don’t know where visitor centers are. They want to have fun, not go looking for the center. Make it more available to purchase a pass.”
- “Making it readily available will help people get it. Maybe local Walmart or places. Courthouse, police station, a convenience store that sells fishing licenses, libraries.”

We also offered a virtual meeting to professionals who work with disproportionately impacted communities and specifically in outdoor equity work. This meeting included professionals from Tri County Family Resource Center, Huerfano/Las Animas Family Resource Center, Vibe Tribe Adventures, Adaptive Adventures, Stem Launch, Boys and Girls Club Metro Area, Equity Initiatives Denver Public Schools, and Greenway Adventures. Everyone was very happy to be invited and to share their feedback.



We encourage CPW to continue to reach out and include those who receive funding from the Outdoor Equity Grant Program to help promote the new pass. Below are some key points and suggestions from this meeting:

- If we're really serious about eliminating barriers, can't we offer it for free?
 - **NOTE:** We recognize this is likely not feasible as CPW would need to find alternative funds to make this happen, as well as strict guidelines on who would be eligible for a free pass.
- Make sure to have options for income eligible that are not only tied to having children of a certain age (such as WIC) - also consider free and reduced lunch for income eligibility
- During the vehicle registration, can there be a question that asks: "Can you afford a \$29 park pass at this time?"
- Inclusive marketing and highlighting accessibility features will be important for the community of people with disabilities to understand how access is relevant to them.
- What about organizations who bring groups of people to parks via mini-bus?
- If you have not already, I would speak to the Colorado Tourism Advisory Board before marketing. They have put a lot of effort towards inclusive engagement.
- Promote these passes to fitness groups/influencers who are trying to encourage people to get outside and exercise.

Recommendation for future outreach:

As we traveled around the state, we met many people who are excited about the Keep Colorado Wild Pass and want to help get the word out. It will be important for CPW to reach out to and engage with community organizations, advocacy groups, and influencers about this new opportunity as they have the network and relationships already built; they just need the messaging and marketing tools.

Overwhelmingly, the family resource centers were instrumental in meeting underserved or underrepresented Coloradans where they are so they can get the information they need. The family resource centers in communities across Colorado are the trusted location for ALL families. Upstream highly recommends using the lists and contacts made through this focused outreach to reach Colorado's diverse, rural, and sometimes underserved populations.

Upstream also wants to thank all of the CPW staff who joined us for these sessions across Colorado. They have deep connections to the parks and the community they serve. We had robust conversations that were amplified by the staff's knowledge.

The last few months have also been a learning experience for us. We want to pass along some lessons learned to CPW for future outreach efforts:

Social Media is not always the solution: In past Upstream outreach efforts, social media outreach was very productive in building for large events. We found in some rural areas but also in metropolitan areas, it should not be assumed that potential participants have access to cell phones or a computer. Two



examples of how this was limiting are in Rocky Ford, we were told that households might only have one cell phone, and even if they have one, they are most likely not using Facebook or social media when using it. We were also told that if someone is using a computer, they prioritize their time and won't be surfing the internet and would miss this type of information.

- **A suggested path forward:** Design an ambassador program with resource centers. Find an ambassador in the community that is a person whom people go to for information. In some cases, this can also be the park rangers.

Be mindful of days/times offered: To meet requirements mandated by the CRS 24-4-109 via HB21-1266 Environmental Justice Act, Upstream was asked to offer many different options during the day and week to allow for more accessibility. We realized that weekdays, during work hours, were difficult, especially for those included in disproportionately impacted communities. Many people do not have the ability to step away from work or family responsibilities to participate in these groups. In addition, this project was scheduled to be completed during the summer. We realized that the summertime is hard for different communities around Colorado: in the Eastern Plains, many people work in farm and agriculture jobs, while on the Western Slope and high country, many people are busy during tourism season and working demanding jobs in the service industry. However, the summer timing of this outreach became necessary in order to engage disproportionately impacted communities and allow for “meaningful opportunities to influence public policy” in setting the income-eligible Keep Colorado Wild pass requirements, as spelled out in the enabling legislation to be done at least six months before implementing the pass.

- **A suggested path forward:** We understand that there are time constraints in executing these projects and the need to abide by legislative requirements. We suggest inquiring with the community before scheduling to ensure the best time for their community to take time to meet with you.

Be careful where and how you promote events. Early in our outreach efforts, we noticed some individuals were signing up and requesting the incentive ahead of time or asking for money to get a ride to the event. It soon occurred to us that some people might be seeing the advertisement for the event and could be scammers. In addition, one of our groups had three attendees from out of state. They had seen the advertisement and thought they would come and grab a gift card.

- **A suggested path forward:** Have a good vetting process (email, phone calls and calls the day before to participate) in place to ensure those signing up to participate in focus groups understand what the group is and that you will only provide incentives to participants and residents of Colorado. The more you promote the event or engagement, the more people will see it, and you might not get appropriate attendees.

We appreciate the opportunity to work on this project and look forward to getting our own Keep Colorado Wild Passes next year!