

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY

TITLE: HIGH LAKE MANAGEMENT

Effective Date: June 6, 2019

I. PURPOSE

Colorado's high lakes are bodies of standing water typically found above 8000 feet. These lakes are small (80 percent are less than 15 acres in size), are mostly of natural origin, but can include some man-made lakes whose water levels are fluctuated via water management by less than 10 vertical feet per year. High lakes are identified by use and stocking management in the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Aquatic Section Water Categorization System. This resource provides for unique aquatic wildlife conservation and fishery recreation opportunities. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission supports the need to protect and manage this relatively limited high lake resource. All of these waters are located in mountainous regions of the state in surroundings of great scenic beauty, but are located within fragile and sensitive ecosystems. Therefore, high lake watersheds should receive high priority management in cooperation with other land and water agencies to meet CPW's objectives for wildlife recreation and conservation.

II. AUTHORITY

1. C.R.S. § 33-1-101 Legislative Declaration (1) "It is the policy of the state of Colorado that the wildlife and their environment are to be protected, preserved, enhanced, and managed for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of this state and its visitors."
2. 33-1-104 General duties of commission. (1) The commission is responsible for all wildlife management, for licensing requirements and for the promulgation of rules, regulations and orders concerning wildlife programs.
3. C.R.S. § 33-1-105 (d) authorizes the Commission to control the capture, propagation or transport of any species of wildlife needed for the purpose of stocking the lands and waters of the state;
4. C.R.S. § 33-1-106 (c) further authorizes the Commission to control export, import, release, possession and transfer of wildlife.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission encourages CPW to place high priority management on high lake watersheds in cooperation with other land and water agencies to meet CPW's objectives for wildlife recreation and conservation.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission recognizes that many factors must be considered regarding management of Colorado's high lake resources and directs CPW to

consider the following concepts when planning, implementing and evaluating the management objectives and goals for these resources.

- A. Cooperation and coordination with the responsible land or water management agencies to assure high quality standards for land and water in the alpine ecosystem surrounding high lakes, while meeting CPW fishery goals. Management should consider Wilderness Act principles as set forth in the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Wilderness Agreement (“*Policies and Guidelines for Fish and Wildlife Management in National Forest and BLM Wilderness*”).
- B. Management objectives for native cutthroat conservation and recovery should receive highest priority, while recognizing the recreational benefits for non-native trout in some circumstances. Fishing recreation and preservation of unique aquatic biota will also be considered as important goals for high lake resources.
- C. Fish stocking is frequently necessary to perpetuate populations in these harsh environments and such stocking will be commensurate with the natural productivity of the lake. Fish to be stocked in high lakes will undergo the highest level of fish pathogen diagnostic testing according to current CPW disease testing protocol.
- D. By their nature, high elevation lakes are typically located in remote areas where access is limited and fishing pressure and fish harvest is usually not excessive. Special fishing regulations may be considered as a viable management option to assure quality fishing when appropriate.
- E. CPW shall periodically evaluate the methods used to stock these waters from the standpoint of risk/benefit (i.e., employee risks associated with aerial stocking vs. horseback stocking, etc. relative to the recreational and conservation values).