



# THE 2019 STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







**COLORADO**  
Gov. John Hickenlooper

December 11, 2018

Dear Fellow Coloradans,

It gives me great pleasure to present Colorado’s 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Colorado’s outdoor heritage, natural beauty, and diverse landscapes make our state the perfect place to enjoy all forms of outdoor recreation.

As Governor, I launched the Colorado the Beautiful Initiative with the vision that, within a generation, every Coloradan will live within ten minutes of a park, trail, or vibrant green space. I created the second Outdoor Recreation Industry Office in the country to ensure this growing sector, which contributes \$62 billion to Colorado’s economy, continues to thrive. And this October, I signed Executive Order 2018-10 to highlight the inextricable link between our growing outdoor recreation sector and the important conservation work that has gone on for decades in Colorado. The Executive Order directs state agencies to create the Inter-Agency Trails and Recreation Council, work with partners to implement the 2019 SCORP, and continue the important work under Colorado the Beautiful.

Outdoor recreation opportunities contribute to increased quality of life, economic prosperity, and the health of Colorado communities and residents. The returns we enjoy from our investment in the outdoors are extraordinary. And while there are clear economic and social benefits to encouraging more people to pursue outdoor recreation in Colorado, the need to balance growth of outdoor recreation with preservation and enhancement of water, land, and wildlife is as important as ever. The SCORP calls for all Coloradans and visitors to have outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation while encouraging greater responsibility and stewardship of our natural and cultural resources.

I applaud Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the SCORP Advisory Group, including the Colorado Outdoor Partnership, for crafting the 2019-2023 SCORP, and I certify that the plan was developed with extensive data collection and public involvement. This is a plan for all Coloradans. Now, it is up to all of us -- local, state, and federal governments, conservation and recreation professionals, volunteers, and recreationalists -- to act upon the information and strategies provided in the plan.

Sincerely,

John W. Hickenlooper  
Governor



Colorado provides its residents and visitors with boundless outdoor recreational opportunities. It is a synergistic relationship – the natural beauty of the state beckons people outdoors, and they spend countless hours and much of their hard-earned money to pursue outdoor recreation. In return, Colorado’s outdoor recreationists gain appreciation for sustaining the state’s outdoor resources.

However, conservation and recreation in Colorado are facing challenges. Our state has one of the fastest growing populations in the country, with a current population of 5.5 million projected to jump to 8.5 million people by 2050. More residents and high tourist visitation means public recreation areas are facing crowding, maintenance backlogs and conflicting outdoor recreation pursuits. Also, increased use and year-round activity can impact natural landscapes and native wildlife. These are challenges that need to be met head on, with thoughtful planning coordinated by a wide range of stakeholders.

Every five years, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) leads development of a comprehensive outdoor recreation plan to maintain eligibility for funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and to inform additional investments from other federal, state, local and private programs. Given the significance of outdoor recreation in the state, this plan is much more than a federal requirement for funding.

**Colorado’s 2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was developed in close collaboration with a wide range of partners to provide a shared vision for the future of Colorado’s outdoors.**

This plan is the first time a Colorado SCORP considers both conservation and recreation together as values that are closely intertwined. In addition, the SCORP looks at current and changing demographics and recreation trends to help the outdoor recreation sector be culturally relevant and respond to future shifts. While SCORP is a comprehensive plan that does not focus on individual recreation uses, it supports all user groups and seeks broad engagement of outdoor recreationists and conservationists as well as including community voices in solutions and action.

**Recreation Participation in Colorado**  
Approximately 92% of Coloradans recreate in the outdoors at least once every few weeks and some four or more times per week. It is essential to understand the needs of these outdoor recreation users, as well as the land managers providing outdoor recreational experiences, in order to successfully plan for the future of conservation and recreation in Colorado. As part of the 2019 SCORP development process, Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff identified activities Coloradans enjoy, why they are motivated to participate, what barriers stand in their way, and what types of outdoor recreation experiences they prefer both locally and statewide.



Those who recreate outdoors had a variety of motivations, the most popular being to **enjoy nature, to relax, for social purposes** such as spending time with loved ones, and to **improve personal health**. The most common recreational activity statewide and regionally is **walking**, followed closely by **hiking/backpacking** and then **picnicking and tent camping**.

With this in mind, the public's recreation priorities focus on the **development of local walking trails and paths, increasing opportunities to view wildlife, and establishing playgrounds with built natural materials**. Having the ability to recreate close to home remains popular in terms of current activity participation (e.g. walking or jogging outdoors) and preferences for future opportunities (e.g. walking trails/paths, built playgrounds, etc.).

The top three barriers to Coloradans' recreation participation were **limited time, traffic congestion and crowding**. To address these issues, the public prefers that recreation providers prioritize long-term planning and management, maintenance of existing infrastructure, and local, regional and statewide trail networks.

When surveyed, land managers expressed concerns about the inability to curtail issues associated with crowding. Their top management issue is **maintaining existing recreation infrastructure and resources, followed by challenges adapting to changing user needs or preferences, coordinating with other outdoor recreation agencies and organizations, and the capacity to serve a growing population**. The top three visitor service issues identified were enforcing responsible use, providing programs to engage youth, and maintaining visitor safety. These high priority issues were similar with tribal land managers, however they added cultural resource management and programming as a significant issue. Although land managers identified these as challenges, most also expressed concern about financial challenges in addressing these issues.

**Outdoor Recreation Economic Impacts in Colorado**

Colorado's outdoor recreation economy generates substantial economic benefits to the state through direct spending on travel and equipment purchases as well as through positive ripple effects across other sectors. In 2017, outdoor recreation in Colorado contributed:

- **\$62.5 billion in economic output**
- **\$35.0 billion in Gross Domestic Product (10% of the entire state GDP)**
- **\$9.4 billion in local, state and federal tax revenue**
- **511,000 jobs in the state (18.7% of the labor force) – a majority outside of Metro Denver**

Outdoor recreation is not only a robust sector, but a growing one. Since 2014, total economic output and tax revenue from outdoor recreation in Colorado nearly doubled and jobs increased by almost 200,000. Outdoor recreation is engrained in Colorado's culture, landscape and quality of life, as well as its economic stability.

**2019 SCORP Priority Areas**

Working together, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the Colorado Outdoor Partnership and the SCORP Advisory Group identified four priority areas on which to focus over the next five years. Building on the 2008 and 2014 SCORPs, these priorities reflect the current trends, opportunities and challenges facing Colorado's outdoor recreation resources today. These priorities are interconnected and critical components to achieving a future vision where Colorado's outdoors continues to provide rich recreation experiences while conserving natural and cultural resources.

In addition, [Colorado's Outdoor Principles](#) were integrated in the 2019 SCORP Priority Areas. These seven core principles for advancing outdoor recreation and conservation were adopted by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission in 2016. These principles are part of a broader national movement to "Shape How we Invest for Tomorrow" (SHIFT) that's intended to refine a collective outdoor ethic promoting both recreational enjoyment and thoughtful conservation of special places.



DUSTIN DOSKOCIL/CPW

**PRIORITY I. Sustainable Access and Opportunity**

**Goal:** More Coloradans and visitors benefit from outdoor recreation and conservation.

**Objective I: Break Down Barriers** - Better understand and address barriers to engaging people in outdoor recreation. Enhance efforts to engage Coloradans who currently lack or have limited opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation.

- Strategy 1:** Compile research about the barriers Coloradans face and the motivations they have for participating in outdoor recreation. Better understand why people of all backgrounds engage in different types of outdoor recreation activities. Utilize information to better understand what drives Coloradans to recreate with the intent of minimizing barriers.
- Strategy 2:** Build trust, relationships and networks through enhanced public engagement, education and community outreach focused on breaking down identified barriers.
- Strategy 3:** Utilize and support existing programs (community, local, state, tribal, federal) that are effectively working to get underrepresented users outdoors.
- Strategy 4:** Advance collaborative efforts between community groups and health and recreation providers to increase prescriptions for nature-based recreation and other policies and practices that promote outdoor recreation for improving public health. Consider the potential barriers to certain populations for fulfilling outdoor recreation prescriptions (Strategy 1).
- Strategy 5:** Engage diverse types of users (demographic, geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, activity preference, etc.) in the management, planning and design of outdoor recreation spaces and access opportunities.
- Strategy 6:** Recruit and retain an outdoor recreation workforce that is diverse and representative of Colorado's demographics.

**Objective II: Technology Connects More People to the Outdoors** - Advance easily accessible information that enhances user experience and offers tools to outdoor recreation providers.

- Strategy 1:** Better understand and inventory technology and online resources (apps, websites, social media, etc.) that help promote and connect people to the outdoors. Compile data on how these tools are reaching underrepresented users.
- Strategy 2:** Inventory and utilize existing technologies that improve user experience by dispersing users to locations that can accommodate recreational activity. Compile data on how technologies are being effective. When possible utilize voluntary data sharing (i.e. GPS tracking, expanding trail/parking lot cameras, etc.).
- Strategy 3:** Find and leverage partners to support the development and maintenance of apps, websites, social media and other tools that address gaps identified in Strategies 1 and 2.

**Objective III: Private and Public Lands Support Outdoor Recreation** – Develop strategies across Colorado to build support for sustainable outdoor recreation access. Advance Colorado the Beautiful vision that every Coloradan will live within 10 minutes of a park, trail or vibrant green space.

- Strategy 1:** Coordinate with local, regional, state, federal and tribal planning efforts currently underway to better understand and address needs to maintain and expand access for outdoor recreation. Consider needs and potential opportunities to work with private landowners.
- Strategy 2:** Incentivize willing private landowners to allow for public access. Maintain and enhance funding for access and conservation easements. Combine with education on the value of private land, recognizing how farms, ranches and other private lands play a critical role in providing habitat, viewsheds and other benefits to outdoor recreation and conservation.



**PRIORITY II. Stewardship**

**Goal:** Coloradans and visitors enjoy and care for natural and cultural resources and commit to stewarding them for future generations.

**Objective I: Build an Outdoor Stewardship Ethic** - Foster awareness and experiences that build an ethic of stewardship and responsibility to care for natural and cultural resources and outdoor recreation infrastructure.

**Strategy 1:** Encourage organizations, and local, state and federal partners to adopt Colorado's Outdoor Principles (modeled after the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation) to endorse an outdoor ethic that promotes both recreational enjoyment and conservation.

**Strategy 2:** Work in partnerships to utilize and bolster marketing/media and education efforts to promote stewardship, conservation and respect for other users and infrastructure. Coordinate with and complement existing efforts (See the Colorado Outdoor Partnership website for list).

**Objective II: Enhance Stewardship Capacity** - Increase capacity of outdoor recreation providers, stewardship organizations and agencies to engage volunteers, employ youth and young adults, and enhance other types of support for on-the-ground, action-oriented stewardship activities.

**Strategy 1:** Promote and implement the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition best practices, tools, trainings and resources to advance on-the-ground stewardship.

**Strategy 2:** Strengthen public-private relationships and collaboration efforts to connect more people to on-the-ground activities, enhance habitat restoration and conservation, and build capacity for organizations engaged in this work.



**PRIORITY III. Land, Water and Wildlife Conservation**

**Goal:** Private and public lands and waters are conserved to support sustainable outdoor recreation, the environment and wildlife habitat.

**Objective I: Advance Landscape-scale Conservation** - Work across jurisdictional and land ownership boundaries to plan for wildlife and natural resource conservation along with the growing demand for recreation access. Collaborate to tackle pressing and emerging issues and to identify and safeguard important areas for conservation, working lands and recreation access across the state.

**Strategy 1:** Initiate and support planning efforts to gather and aggregate data and produce maps that factor in landscape-scale considerations (including migration corridors and unfragmented habitat) and inform land use decisions (private, local, state, federal and tribal). Convene diverse outdoor interests with land managers to compile and interpret data and to develop effective collaborations throughout the planning process.

**Strategy 2:** Incorporate outcomes of Strategy 1 into land use decisions by promoting and utilizing consistent maps and datasets to illustrate the overlap of recreation and conservation interests. Collaborate with private, local, state, federal and tribal land managers/property owners to inform decisions in support of conservation and recreation objectives.

**Objective II: Address Recreation Impacts** - Proactively manage visitors and maintain infrastructure to provide positive outdoor recreation experiences while limiting resource impacts. Utilize best practices when developing new trails or other outdoor infrastructure.

**Strategy 1:** Compile existing research and conduct new research to better understand the impacts of recreation on land, water, wildlife and cultural resources. Incorporate findings into the development of management guidelines that optimize conservation while maintaining infrastructure and recreation experience.

**Strategy 2:** Share outcomes from Strategy 1 with outdoor recreation partners (private, local, state, federal, tribal and NGOs). Convene partners to build broad support and commitment to address findings and mitigate impacts of recreation on natural resources.

**PRIORITY IV. Funding the Future**

**Goal:** Coloradans and visitors contribute to diverse funding sources that are dedicated to support outdoor recreation and conservation. Existing sources of funds are preserved.

**Objective I: Build Support for Conservation Funding** - Raise political and public awareness for the value of Colorado's outdoors to Coloradans' quality of life, economic prosperity, heritage and public and environmental health so that more people contribute funds to support outdoor recreation and conservation.

**Strategy 1:** Develop and implement a public awareness/education initiative and share coordinated messages to help build support for statewide funding.

**Strategy 2:** Continue to urge and advocate for Congress and the Colorado General Assembly to fully fund outdoor recreation and conservation programs.

**Objective II: Diversify and Expand Funding Source(s)** - Identify and pursue new funds available to organizations and management agencies that directly benefits outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources.

**Strategy 1:** Engage and collaborate with a wider community of user groups, businesses and constituents on innovative funding strategies. Identify paths to make it easier for users, businesses and others to contribute.

**Strategy 2:** Connect grant funding to outdoor recreation and conservation priorities and encourage other funders to do the same.

**Strategy 3:** Identify and establish new funding mechanisms utilizing findings from the CPW Funding Study, recommendations from the Colorado Outdoor Partnership and other sources to support the shared strategy presented in this plan.





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