



B 2019 010

EXECUTIVE ORDER

The Creation of Additional Colorado State Parks

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Governor of the State of Colorado and, in particular, pursuant to Article IV, Section 2 of the Colorado Constitution, I, Jared Polis, Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order regarding the creation of additional Colorado State Parks.

I. Background and Purpose

As our State's population continues to grow, more Coloradans and visitors to the State are participating in outdoor recreation activities. Over 80 percent of Coloradans participate in trail-related activities on a regular basis and 90 percent of Coloradans participate in outdoor recreation annually. Visitation at Colorado's State Parks increased dramatically over the last five years, from 11,948,406 visitor days in fiscal year (FY) 2013-2014 to 15,169,895 visitor days in FY 2017-2018, with no significant additions of acreage to the State Park system. To ensure that Colorado meets the growing need for additional public lands where all Coloradans and visitors may recreate, it is incumbent upon us to act now to identify additional areas that will serve as suitable State Parks for the enjoyment of future generations.

Colorado State Parks are "area[s] having outstanding scenic and natural qualities and often containing significant archaeological, ecological, geological, and other scientific values so as to make imperative the preservation of the area . . . for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of residents and visitors." C.R.S. § 33-10-102(23). Colorado has 41 State Parks that reflect the diversity of our State. State Parks represent our State's natural and cultural heritage, and showcase Colorado's diverse landscape.

Understanding the importance of preserving natural places for the benefit of Coloradans and visitors alike, the Colorado State Legislature set forth a policy and directive for the State to develop State Parks suitable for activities such as "camping, picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, environmental education, sightseeing, hunting, boating, fishing, swimming, and other water sports, and other recreational activities." C.R.S. § 33-10-101(2)(a). Senate Bill 18-143 (SB18-143), the Hunting, Fishing, and Parks for Future Generations Act, set a goal for Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to identify and plan the development of a new Colorado State Park. To achieve that goal, CPW worked with the Parks and Wildlife Commission to develop Future State Parks Criteria (Parks Criteria) that reflect the interests and priorities of Coloradans. As a result of SB18-143 and the Parks Criteria, the selection of new State Parks will focus on



providing outstanding nature-based recreation and community value, conserving natural resources, and supporting a financially sustainable State Park system.

To carry out the will of the Legislature and the mission of CPW, Colorado has identified the Fishers Peak property (Property) as a unique opportunity to achieve landscape-level conservation, provide access to new public land, and support the economy of Las Animas County and southern Colorado. Fishers Peak provides an iconic backdrop to the City of Trinidad and southeast Colorado. Fishers Peak is visible for miles and, at 9,633 feet, is the highest peak in the United States east of Interstate 25. The expansive Property extends from the southern outskirts of Trinidad to the New Mexico border, and from Interstate 25 east to the cliffs of Fishers Peak and Barcla Mesa. Totalling 30 square miles, with over 3,000 feet of elevational gradient, the Property serves as an important ecological connection between Colorado's mountains and its eastern grasslands. According to Colorado Natural Heritage Program data, the Property provides habitat for numerous rare and imperiled mammals, plants, and reptiles, and is a critical wildlife migration corridor.

After identifying the Property as a potential State Park location, Trinidad invited the other project partners, including The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, CPW, and Great Outdoors Colorado (collectively, "Partners"), to work together to achieve its vision for the Property. The Partners are focused on two fundamental goals: (1) Protecting and managing the Property to preserve its natural and biological values for future generations; and (2) Creating meaningful outdoor recreational opportunities, including access to the public for wildlife-related recreation and hunting, to benefit the cultural, educational, and economic future of Trinidad, Las Animas County, and the State. The Partners intend to work together to develop the Property into Colorado's newest State Park to best serve the Partners' primary goals.

Securing public ownership of the Property will result in over 55.5 square miles of preserved land, including the adjacent James M. John State Wildlife Area and Lake Dorothy State Wildlife Area in Colorado and Sugarite Canyon State Park in New Mexico. Hunters will find elk, deer, and turkey, among other game animals, abundant on the Property. Hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians will explore new trails. Families will enjoy a diversity of picnicking and camping choices. Fishing will be available at nearby Trinidad Lake State Park. The Property will provide excellent outdoor recreation activities as a future State Park.

State Parks add to our State's quality of life and cultural heritage, and provide essential recreational opportunities. While the Property is the first area to be considered as a State Park under my administration, I will continue to work with localities and State agencies to identify other lands to be evaluated for public use as potential State Parks.

II. Declarations and Directives

To celebrate Colorado's public lands, conserve wildlife, and promote recreational opportunity for all, I hereby issue the following directives:

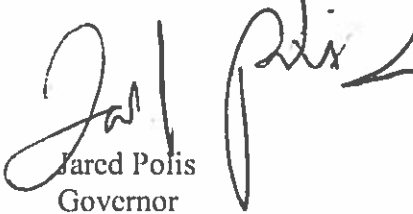
- A. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shall work with relevant parties, including the Partners, to establish a Colorado State Park on the Property.
- B. DNR shall work with CPW to vet, design, and implement meaningful recreational opportunities on portions of the Property as soon as feasible, and ideally no later than January 1, 2021.
- C. DNR shall engage the Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) to identify and prioritize resources required for infrastructure development on the Property in FY 2019-2020. In addition, DNR shall engage with OSPB to consider, plan for, and prioritize investments in the development of the Property and other assets in the State Park system in future fiscal years through the annual budget process.
- D. DNR shall work with CPW to identify additional landscapes that satisfy the Parks Criteria to be potentially established as future State Parks in partnership with State agencies, local governments, conservation organizations, and the agricultural community.

III. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in effect unless modified or rescinded by future Executive Order of the Governor.



GIVEN under my hand and the
Executive Seal of the State of
Colorado, this 12th day
of September, 2019.


Jared Polis
Governor