

Future Generations Act Report 2019

OCTOBER 31, 2019



Table of Contents

Goal 1: Increasing the Number of Hunters and Anglers	5
Expanding hunter and angler education and outreach	5
Increasing Grants for Fishing is Fun	6
Developing the Cameo Shooting and Education Complex	7
Expanding Grants for Shooting Ranges	7
Goal 2: Partnering with Stakeholders to Engage All Outdoor Recreationists	8
Strengthening Partnerships with Stakeholders	8
Growing Alternative Sources of Funding	8
Goal 3: Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Employees	9
Recruiting New Employees	9
Retaining Existing Employees	9
Increasing Volunteer Resources	9
Goal 4: Supporting Access Programs on Public and Private Lands	10
Expanding Access Through Trails	10
Expanding Access to Hunting and Fishing	10
Goal 5: Increasing and Improving Big Game Populations	11
Increasing and Improving Habitat for Big Game Populations	11
Improving Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors	11
Goal 6: Identifying and Beginning to Plan a New Colorado State Park	12
Establishing Fisher’s Peak property as a new state park	12
Investing in operations, maintenance and customer service	12
Developing criteria to evaluate a new state park	12
Goal 7: Reduce Maintenance Backlog and Repair for High Risk Dams	13
Rehabilitating High Risk Dams	13
Goal 8: Increase the Number of Fish Stocked and Renovate Fish Hatcheries	14
Increasing Fish Production	14
Modernizing and Renovating the Hatchery System	14
Goal 9: Reduce Large Capital Construction Backlog	14
Reduce capital construction and maintenance backlog	14
Goal 10: Reduce the Need to List Additional Species	15
Investing in non-game species conservation	15
Investing in wetlands conservation	15
Partnering with private landowners in pursuit of mutual goals	16
Impact on License Sales	17
Appendix 1: Reporting Requirements for the Future Generations Act	18
Appendix 2: Colorado Waterfowl Stamp Fund Grants	19

Cover photo by Crystal Egli; Bottom cover photos by Mike Delliveneri

Letter from the Director

The people of Colorado have entrusted the staff of Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Parks and Wildlife Commission with an incredible mission. For more than 120 years staff have been dedicating their lives to perpetuating the wildlife resources of the state, providing a quality state parks system, and to providing enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of our natural resources. As Colorado's primary agency focused on protecting and caring for our most valued and valuable resources we are working for something that is at the heart of the Colorado lifestyle.

This mission means everything to us at CPW. The passage of Senate Bill 18-143 creates a better opportunity to meet the challenges we face in conserving our natural resources, recreational opportunities and outdoor way of life. Entrusting the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to enact modest and limited fee increases in line with the growth of the state allows our staff to continue making our mission a reality for the people of Colorado.

Our progress toward the ten goals that are included in the Future Generations Act are presented within this report. We're pleased to be able to show action being made toward each goal in our first year. While the announcement of the Fisher's Peak property as the next potential state park may have been the biggest story we were able to share this year, we're equally proud of several other strides being made toward the goals of the bill. We are proud of this year's addition of over 100,000 acres of state trust land opened to hunting through the Public Access Program and excited for more acreage to come. We're thankful for Governor Polis' signing of an executive order to protect important migration corridors and habitat for our state's wildlife. We're pleased to have the opportunity to engage various outdoor recreationists through public outreach programs regarding park management plans and desires for future outdoor recreation activities in the state.

With a growing population, changing demographics and needs for more and varied outdoor recreation, the ability to display our relevancy to all Coloradans and to build and maintain trust in meeting the state's needs at the crossroads of conservation and recreation has never been more important. Colorado Parks and Wildlife staff are the passionate leaders of conservation, recreation and wildlife management in Colorado, and we are pleased to present the 2019 Future Generations Act Report.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you.



Dan



Executive Summary

With the passage of the Future Generations Act by the Colorado General Assembly in 2018, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) committed to fulfilling 10 goals by 2025. They include:

1. Increasing the number of hunters and anglers in Colorado in the face of national declines in hunting and fishing numbers through investments in recruitment programs, such as hunter education and Fishing is Fun, the development of the Cameo Shooting and Education Complex, and grants for shooting ranges in all regions of the state;
2. Partnering with stakeholders to develop strategies to engage all outdoor recreationists, including hikers, bikers, climbers, and wildlife watchers, in funding the division and commission, maintenance of state lands and facilities, and management of wildlife;
3. Recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources;
4. Supporting access programs on public and private lands, including the renewal of existing high-priority leases that provide public access for hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists;
5. Increasing and improving the state's big game populations through investments in habitat and conservation, including increased support for highway wildlife crossings to protect animals and motorists;
6. Identifying and beginning to plan the development of a new Colorado state park and investing in other initiatives to increase park visitation, maintain excellent customer service, and generate revenue;
7. Reducing the \$44.76 million maintenance and repair backlog by 50% for the 11 dams owned and operated by the division that pose the highest risks to life and property and establishing an appropriate funding stream to continue maintenance of all of the division's 110 dams;
8. Increasing the number of fish stocked in Colorado water to more than 90 million through the development of a statewide hatchery modernization plan, renovation of one of the state's 19 fish hatcheries, and reduction in the maintenance backlog for all hatcheries, many of which are 70 to 100 years old;
9. Reducing the division's known \$26 million large capital construction and maintenance backlog by 50% and establishing a capital development backlog strategic plan to provide a stable funding stream to address future maintenance projects at state wildlife areas and state parks; and
10. Reducing the need to list additional state trust species under the federal "Endangered Species Act of 1973", 16 U.S.C. sec. 1531 et seq., by partnering with private landowners to improve species distribution and abundance monitoring and disease prevention efforts." (Section 2 (1)).

Most of the fee increases the Future Generations Act enabled were initiated on January 1, 2019 so the bill's financial benefits are just beginning to be realized (most new revenue is not being realized until the fall of 2019). However, much has already been done towards fulfilling the Act's goals and CPW is pleased to share our progress in this first annual report.

Among the highlights, CPW is proud to draw attention to:

- Increased funding for programs that help to recruit hunters and anglers, like hunter outreach, hunter education, Fishing is Fun and shooting range development grants
- Expanded efforts to increase the public's awareness of the need for alternative funding for CPW
- Increased number of applicants for critical positions at CPW and steps taken to address employee pay inequities
- Increased funding for recreational trails and access for hunting and fishing
- Declaration of CPW's newest state park and increased funding to maintain existing parks
- Reduction of the maintenance and repair backlog on CPW's high risk dams
- Increased number of fish stocked in Colorado waters and work to modernize CPW's hatchery system
- Increased funding for large and small capital construction projects to address maintenance needs at state parks and wildlife areas
- Expanded efforts to collaborate with private landowners to conserve species of greatest conservation need

Goal 1: Increasing the Number of Hunters and Anglers

Hunting and angling are important to Colorado's welfare economically, politically and socially. CPW is working to increase hunting and fishing participation through investments in several recruitment programs. As of 2017 (the last year for which data on individual license holders has been reported), there were approximately 945,000 fishing license holders¹ and 295,000 hunting license holders² in Colorado.

Expanding hunter and angler education and outreach

As a statutorily mandated educational program for future hunters, CPW's hunter education staff, including a dedicated volunteer corps, provides the highest quality programming to familiarize new hunters to CPW and learn how to hunt responsibly and properly. CPW offers classes across the state, with both traditional and online options. In FY 2019, 17,200 students participated in CPW's hunter education courses, a 3% increase. "Increase" in this case and throughout this report (unless otherwise noted) are increases from the average of the past three fiscal years.

Additionally, CPW runs a hunter outreach program that specifically seeks to attract people with non-hunting backgrounds through clinics, seminars, advice, mentored hunts and online educational content for novice hunters of all ages. In FY 2019, CPW reached over 3,900 people across the state through more than 240 hunter outreach events. This includes more than 140-mentored hunts through CPW's Hunter Outreach Program, a 40% increase. In 2018, CPW also created a new Novice Adult Outreach License, which provides adults who are new to hunting with an opportunity to be considered for select, mentored hunts similar to our current Youth Outreach License. We also developed a new program called, "Take a Friend Hunting," which provides incentives for current hunters to take out a new or lapsed hunter. This program is one of the first of its kind in the country, receiving over 100 applicant pair entries in the first month.

The angler outreach program strives to encourage more people, especially families with children and people who have never fished before, to fish and enjoy time outdoors. In FY 2019, CPW and volunteers held approximately 150 clinics or events with 10,000 participants. Of note in FY 2019, CPW held its first fishing clinic in partnership with The Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Denver Parks and Recreation and the Colorado Wildlife Federation with a focus on providing Spanish-speaking families an opportunity to engage in family-friendly, healthy activities close to home. The event attracted more than 300 participants.



Delliveneri/CPW

"Colorado Parks and Wildlife took outdoor education to a new level Tuesday at Littleton's Lake Lehow with a very special fishing clinic for children with Mercy Housing. Malik Wilder started an Atlanta-based nonprofit called Fishing For Hip Hop. Its goal is to help get youth involved in fishing and the outdoors. Wilder was hired by CPW to run Tuesday's clinic and while the state offered to pay for his entire trip, he refused to accept compensation.

"Normally they come out, they'll see a Caucasian woman fishing and teaching fishing. They won't see someone that's looking like them and we have a diverse crowd of children today, and they get to see all different types of people in different jobs and I'm just hoping they really grasp that."

With Wilder making the rounds instructing, around 30 kids with Mercy Housing spent Tuesday morning working on their casts. Even the smallest of the bunch was giving it her best shot. Not one let the normal frustrations of fishing wear on them. When it came time to hit the water, nearly all caught a fish. And when the clinic was over, each went home with their very own rod.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife host youth casting clinics throughout the summer and host individualized clinics for groups just like Mercy Housing."

-- CBS4 Denver June 4, 2019

¹ This corresponds to USFWS Reporting Year 2020, but includes free senior fishing license holders in License Year 2017.

² This corresponds to USFWS Reporting Year 2020.

Increasing Grants for Fishing is Fun

Since 1987, the Fishing Is Fun program has provided matching grants to local and county governments, park and recreation departments, water districts, angling organizations and others for more than 350 projects to improve angling opportunities in Colorado. Fishing Is Fun awards are matched by local funds, along with donated services, materials and volunteer time, commonly covering 40-50% of project costs.

In 2019, CPW awarded \$755,000 in matching grant funds to 11 projects across the state (Figure 1). The 2019 awards total represents an almost 90% increase in funding in comparison to previous years. Among the projects awarded funds this year are:

- A new ramp at the Shady Island Boat Launch located just north of Gunnison. The new ramp will help relieve dangerously overcrowded conditions at the existing, informal boat ramp nearby. The project will also develop in-channel aquatic habitat improvements.
- Major habitat restoration work in the Swan River valley near Breckenridge. The Swan River was essentially “turned upside down” by gold dredges in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Phase 1 of the project demonstrated that the river could be restored to a functioning fishery. Phase 2 of the river restoration project will ultimately help to restore more than 17 miles of connectivity in the Swan River and its tributaries.
- New fishing jetties at Blanca Vista Park Pond in Alamosa. The jetties will provide expanded access to a new fishing pond geared toward youth and senior anglers, located on the north side of the city.
- Construction of a new diversion structure at the Robinson Ditch in Basalt. The project will construct a permanent diversion structure to eliminate safety issues for drift boat and raft anglers as well as other rafters. The new structure will also allow increased upstream fish passage and reduce annual aquatic habitat impacts from structure maintenance.

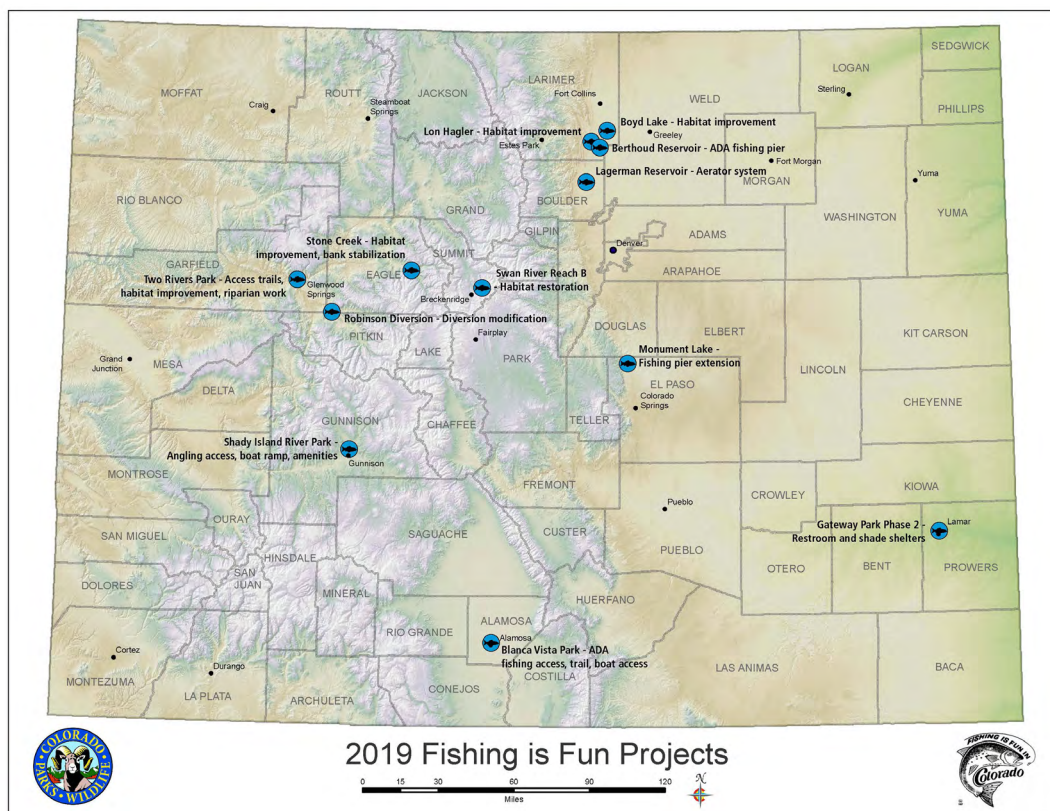


Fig. 1

“Early funding support from the Fishing is Fun program was instrumental in advancing the Swan River Restoration Project. As one of the first project funding sources, it demonstrated a high level of commitment to the project and was a catalyst for developing the additional funding we needed to initiate restoration.”

- Jason Lederer, Summit County Open Space and Trails Program

Developing the Cameo Shooting and Education Complex

The Cameo Shooting and Education Complex is a world-class educational and training facility located just outside of Grand Junction, where kids can learn about the safe use of firearms and competitive shooters can sharpen their skills. FY 2019 saw the completion of Phase 1-A of three planned phases. Phase 1-A includes a 25-acre, 21-bay public shooting range and shooting events facility. Phase 1-B (Sporting Clays courses) construction is slated to begin in the fall of 2019.

Phase 2 (visitors center and indoor ranges) is in the planning and design phase and will be under construction in FY 2025. Phase 3 is the 1,000-yard rifle range and it is scheduled for design and construction after that. In the meantime, Cameo is quickly becoming a top destination for people from all over the world to participate in organized shooting competitions. In FY 2019, it hosted 99 competitions or events and saw 5,400 paid visitors.

Expanding Grants for Shooting Ranges

CPW's Shooting Range Development Grant (SRDG) program, one of the largest in the nation, provides matching grants to towns, counties, sportsmen and outdoor recreation organizations, shooting clubs and others for projects to establish, improve or expand shooting and archery ranges across the state. In 2019, CPW awarded \$725,000 to eight shooting ranges across Colorado, a 33% increase. Range project funding includes more than \$576,000 in additional local funds.

The SRDG program is a major tool in helping to meet the demand for safe, accessible ranges, by funding construction of new public ranges or improvements to existing ranges. Among the projects funded in 2019 are three that will make major strides toward reducing user conflicts on public lands near Front Range metro areas:

- Construction of a new public range next to the Boulder Rifle Club. If approved by the county, the project will develop 25-yard, 50-yard and 100-yard ranges, with up to 12 firing lanes each. Future phases will develop 200-yard and 300-yard ranges.
- Planning and design work of a new public range in Clear Creek County. The proposed range is adjacent to the existing Clear Creek Sportsman's Club, at the former rodeo grounds west of Idaho Springs.
- Assessment, design and engineering work at seven potential organized range sites on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest between Denver and Colorado Springs.

CPW's Small Shooting Range Grant Program enhances safety and public use at shooting ranges across the state through smaller capital improvements such as shooting benches or target stands. In FY 2019, CPW awarded 8 grants totaling \$55,000 dollars to ranges across the state.

CPW also operates ranges on some of its State Wildlife Area and State Park properties. In 2019, CPW allocated nearly \$1,100,000 toward 13 archery and shooting range projects on CPW properties across the state. 2019 funding is more than double 2018 funding levels. Among the improvements funded in 2019 are:

- Road and trail improvements at the Park County range near Como.
- New archery ranges at Elkhead State Park and Gunnison State Wildlife Area.
- New restrooms and shade shelters at the Byers Canyon, West Rifle Creek and Plateau Creek ranges.
- New monitoring cameras for the Basalt range.

Figure 2 shows the location of the Shooting Range Development Grants and CPW range projects.

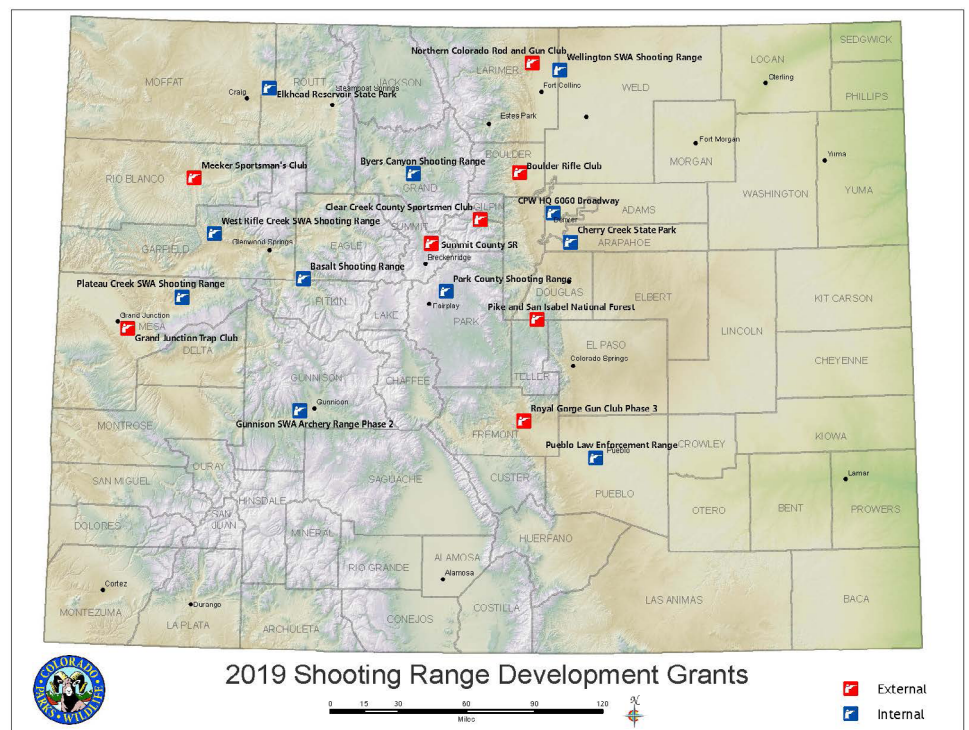


Fig. 2

Goal 2: Partnering with Stakeholders to Engage All Outdoor Recreationists

To ensure that sufficient resources are available to fulfill CPW's mission to manage wildlife, provide a quality state park system and inspire people to be active stewards of Colorado's natural resources, CPW needs to engage all outdoor recreationists, including hikers, bikers, climbers and wildlife watchers, in funding the division and the commission. Developing new partnerships, strengthening existing partnerships and exploring alternative funding mechanisms are key steps towards that end.

Strengthening Partnerships with Stakeholders

CPW's Partners Program helps to foster alignment and trust through several outward-facing initiatives, such as the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP). The CO-OP is a collaborative group representing diverse interests at the intersection of outdoor recreation and conservation. In FY 2019, the CO-OP continued its efforts to ensure Colorado's private and public lands support wildlife, outdoor recreation, agricultural heritage, and economic well-being for generations to come. The group met quarterly and worked to develop the Colorado Pathway, a document highlighting areas where collaboration is particularly needed to advance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado and framing the CO-OP's commitment to educate the public and pursue funding.

CPW's Partners Program also organizes the Partners in the Outdoors Conference, which is proving to be the signature platform in the state for organizations to network and collaborate to advance and balance outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado.

The 2019 conference was a rousing success with attendance increasing 11% from 2018 to nearly 575 people representing over 250 organizations. During the conference, CPW partnered with key organizations to examine how Coloradans and visitors can financially support outdoor recreation and conservation, including sessions hosted by the Colorado Lottery, Great Outdoors Colorado, the National Forest Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Fremont Adventure Recreation, the CO-OP and Meridian Institute.



Growing Alternative Sources of Funding

CPW also continued its work on improving alternative funding streams. In FY 2019, revenue collected from the issuance and renewals of the Wildlife Sporting Plate, a specialty license plate that allows hunters and anglers to show their pride in wildlife recreation, totaled \$342,000, an over 200% increase. Additionally, in 2019, revenue from license plate sales and renewals was used to fund over \$450,000 in grants through the Shooting Range Development Grant Program and the Fishing is Fun Program.

CPW is also working to increase donations, sponsorships and other voluntary contributions. In FY 2019, donations to CPW totaled \$255,000. Additionally, voluntary contributions to the "nongame and endangered wildlife cash fund," which can be contributed as a part of Colorado's state income tax return, totaled \$196,000 in FY 2019. These contributions support wildlife rehabilitation and the preservation of threatened and endangered species. Also in an effort to increase sponsorships, CPW staff walked the floor at the Outdoor Retailer show in June 2019, connecting with over 35 Colorado companies about partnership opportunities with CPW, and there is now a webpage on CPW's website with information on sponsorship opportunities.

Finally, CPW and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are working to explore future alternative funding opportunities and gauge user groups' perspectives about those alternatives. In 2018, CPW funded a study conducted by the Meridian Institute, which analyzed various alternative funding opportunities. The study found that increasing the relevancy of CPW with a broad set of stakeholders is a necessary first step to gaining their financial support. However, there are limited data as to what Coloradans know about CPW and how the agency serves Coloradans' interests in a way that maximizes relevancy to them. To tackle the relevancy question, CPW is hiring a consultant to find out more about Coloradans' perspectives about the agency and to test messaging about awareness and support of CPW. This work will feed into an engagement plan to grow CPW's relevancy and build support for sustainable revenue sources.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission is also engaging with outdoor recreationists on strategies to increase funding for the division. In July 2018, the Commission hosted a forum entitled "Building the Value: Are You In For The Outdoors?" Two engaging panels discussed how to expand CPW's customer base and get more customers contributing to CPW's conservation efforts via funds and volunteers.

Goal 3: Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Employees

CPW's employees are without question the agency's most important asset. Managing Colorado's wildlife, parks, recreational, terrestrial and aquatic resources requires the dedication of thousands of hard-working staff and volunteers. Ensuring qualified employees from diverse backgrounds are recruited and retained and increasing volunteer resources are essential to CPW's mission.

Recruiting New Employees

Attracting qualified candidates who meet CPW's needs can sometimes be challenging, especially in a competitive economy. To address these challenges, CPW formed a Recruitment and Retention Team that meets monthly to develop strategies to increase the number of qualified applicants for key positions. In FY 2019 these efforts included developing a new Park Ranger Prep Academy to support 15 interested candidates in preparing their applications for the Park Manager position, conducting a question and answer session live on Facebook to increase awareness of the Park Manager and District Wildlife Manager positions, and working with DNR's Human Resources team to better promote temporary, seasonal job opportunities. These efforts seem to be working as CPW received over 230 qualified applicants for the Park Manager position in 2019, a 109% increase, and almost 130 qualified applicants for the District Wildlife Manager position in 2019, a 36% increase.

Increasing and retaining employees from diverse backgrounds within CPW's workforce is also essential to remain relevant to all Coloradans and an area of focus under DNR's Wildly Important Goal on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The CPW Recruitment and Retention Team has been updating CPW's website and marketing videos to highlight diverse employees and adding diversity value statements to job announcement templates. They have also provided resources for staff to foster more equitable hiring and avoid unconscious bias in hiring, and, as part of a multi-agency Equitable Workforce committee, they are developing a hiring and retention guide for Colorado state agencies. CPW is also investing time in cultivating relationships with organizations and individuals representing diverse communities to better understand their needs and reinforce CPW as an employer of choice for candidates from all backgrounds and abilities.

Retaining Existing Employees

To retain qualified employees it is essential that CPW's compensation policies are fair and consistent. CPW's Leadership Team worked with DNR's Human Resources Department to address some of CPW's pay compression and other pay inequity issues. New standardized guidelines for CPW's pay model help to ensure fairness among employees. The agency's housing premium also now applies regardless of job class. As a result, in 2018, over 300 employees, about a third of CPW's workforce, saw an increase in their salary, from small amounts to a few hundred dollars each month. In September 2019, an additional 30 employees' salaries were increased. These initiatives appear to be working, as DNR's turnover rate, 7.6% in 2018, remains among the lowest of all State agencies. Additionally, to ensure that employees feel fully informed, CPW staff are investing time and resources to improve internal communication. Towards that end, the internal webpage, CPWNet, is being redesigned, to make it a more effective resource for staff.

Increasing Volunteer Resources

Volunteers are also essential to CPW, as they help to expand services across the state. In FY 19, almost 6,000 volunteers contributed over 331,200 hours of time, a 9% increase from the previous year. That is an equivalent value of \$9.2 million or 159 full-time employees. Additionally, a recent survey of volunteers' experiences found that 88% of respondents said they enjoyed volunteering with CPW. Volunteers serve in a variety of capacities, from campsite hosts to raptor monitors. Last year, dozens of volunteers hiked 2.5 miles carrying greenback cutthroat trout up Dry Gulch to help Colorado Parks and Wildlife stock the stream.



Goal 4: Supporting Access Programs on Public and Private Lands

Outdoor recreation is fundamental to Colorado. It helps to maintain Colorado's outstanding quality of life and provides vital economic contributions to the State. Increasing access for hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists to public and private lands is among CPW's most important activities. CPW is instrumental in achieving DNR's Wildly Important Goal to Increase Public Access. CPW expects to increase areas of public access easements, leases, and other agreements to 2.1 million total acres by June 30, 2022.

Expanding Access Through Trails

Trails are how many residents and visitors access and connect to Colorado's nature and wildlife. Continuing to improve trail recreation opportunities, while protecting wildlife, habitat and cultural resources, is especially important in light of the state's increasing population. CPW provides support for trail recreation through several grant programs. In FY 2019, CPW provided:

- 28 grants for the construction and maintenance of trails for non-motorized use. These grants totaled \$4,349,000, a 19% increase.
- 53 grants, totaling \$4,323,000, for the promotion and support of off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails, including trail maintenance, construction, trailheads, parking areas, support facilities, trail signs, maps and education.
- 44 grants to provide over 3,000 miles of safe and well-maintained winter trails for use by all winter sports enthusiasts. These grants totaled \$1,210,000, a 25% increase.
- 10 grants, totaling \$3,852,000, for other trail projects.

Expanding Access to Hunting and Fishing

Another way that CPW helps to expand opportunities to access the outdoors is by obtaining public access easements for fishing and hunting on private land. The Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP) is an annual grant program that allows private landowners to voluntarily provide wildlife-related recreational access to the public. In FY 2019, CPW closed on several large projects, in partnership with the Colorado land trust community, increasing the total number of acres of perpetual access for hunting and fishing by 4,418. This includes the Hale River Ranch access easement (402 acres), the Pothook Ranch access easement (2,357 acres), and the Flanders Ranch access easement (1,659 acres). However, due to development pressure and competing interests, CPW saw a decrease of about 24,800 acres of term-limited access for hunting and fishing in FY 2019. This resulted in a total of 1,163,100 acres of access (fee title and access easements) for hunting and fishing statewide, a 2% reduction from the total in FY 2018.

The Public Access Program, which provides seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities on Colorado trust land across the state, is one of several ways hunters and anglers can get out in Colorado. In July 2019, CPW announced a significant increase to the Public Access Program, as part of a multi-year effort to double its size from 480,000 acres to 1,000,000 acres. This marks the first major expansion of the program since it began in 1993. So far, in FY 2019, CPW has added over 75,000 acres to the Public Access Program.

Prior to this expansion, the majority of properties enrolled in the Public Access Program were located in Northwestern Colorado where there is prime big game hunting. CPW is providing a broader array of hunting opportunities on trust lands by expanding the program in Eastern Colorado where bird hunting and small game hunting is prevalent. Nearly all of the properties enrolled in the Public Access Program are also working ranches leased for agriculture, and hunters are expected to respect the existing agriculture operations.

Also in 2019, CPW expanded the Walk-In Access Program (WIA), which allows walk-in hunting on private land that has been enrolled voluntarily by landowners, adding approximately 173,000 acres for small game access, of which 86,000 acres are also available for big game access. CPW also has a successful Bighorn Sheep Access Program, providing private land access for high quality sheep hunting. This innovative program provides incentives for landowners with suitable habitat to establish and maintain bighorn sheep herds in keeping with CPW management goals. After the success for the first four years of the program, all acreage was re-enrolled for another four years.

"It's a huge chance to increase the amount of public access and land that is opened can still be used to raise revenue for the schools"

- Tim Brass,
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Goal 5: Increasing and Improving Big Game Populations

Increasing and improving big game populations is critical to CPW's mission. CPW employs a variety of programs to protect and improve wildlife habitat. Among the tools CPW biologists, field personnel and property technicians use are conservation easements, habitat improvements, landowner programs, big game research and habitat mapping. As Colorado's population continues to expand, it is also important to direct time and attention to protecting movement corridors and winter ranges.

Increasing and Improving Habitat for Big Game Populations

One major CPW initiative started in 2014 is the Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy with the goal of reversing mule deer decline, a phenomenon that has occurred in many western states. Among the priorities are efforts to protect habitat and mitigate development impacts, reduce the impact of human recreation on mule deer, maintain a strong disease-monitoring program, and reduce the impact of highways on mule deer survival. Consistent with a top Strategy goal, in FY 2019 over 11,300 acres of habitat were improved, with a focus on restoring and increasing habitat function primarily for big game species.

CPW's Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) also helps to improve habitat for big game population by working with agricultural operators to reduce wildlife conflicts associated with forage and fences. While the 2019 report has yet to be released, in FY 2018, the HPP expended over \$3 million and leveraged over \$4.3 million in cash contributions, \$3.1 million in in-kind services, and over 11,000 hours of labor from partners in efforts to reduce conflicts and meet game management objectives. More than 18,000 acres of habitat were improved through HPP projects in FY 2018.

Finally, the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP) offers opportunities for private landowners to voluntarily protect important wildlife habitat through establishing conservation easements. CPW received almost 20 applications in the last CWHP grant cycle, and in March 2019 alone, the CPW Real Estate Section secured conservation easements on over 3,500 acres of land.



Improving Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors

Maintaining intact and connected landscapes and habitats, including critical winter range, is essential to the health of Colorado's big game herds. In August 2019, Governor Polis signed an Executive Order prioritizing the conservation of big game winter habitat and migration corridors.

The Executive Order also underscores the importance and prioritization of wildlife crossings when planning roadways or doing construction on existing roadways. Thanks to previous efforts to construct transportation solutions designed to protect wildlife and vehicles from highway collisions in priority areas of the state, like Highway 9, thousands of animals including mule deer, elk and bear are now able to safely cross busy highways, which in turn increases human safety on our highways. In 2019, work towards this objective continued, with \$1 million of funding made available for constructing wildlife fence and designing wildlife crossings across the state. Additionally, in response to the Department of the Interior's Secretarial Order 3362, CPW has identified five priority landscapes and five research landscapes to study and conserve big game migration corridors and winter ranges.



Goal 6: Identifying and Beginning to Plan a New Colorado State Park

Colorado's state parks offer access to some of the state's most magnificent and diverse places for outdoor recreation, provide habitat for wildlife, and conserve special landscapes. Colorado's state parks are drawing more visitors every year. With attendance at many of Colorado's state parks at record high levels, it is important to invest in the operations and maintenance at existing state parks, to maintain excellent customer service, and to expand the park system to accommodate increasing public demand, when and where possible.

Establishing Fisher's Peak property as a new state park

In September 2019, Governor Polis announced a partnership working to establish the property surrounding the iconic 9,633-foot Fishers Peak as Colorado's newest state park. The 30-square-mile property connects Colorado's eastern grasslands to the western mountains, and serves as an important wildlife corridor. CPW is coordinating the opening of the new state park with diverse partners, including the City of Trinidad, The Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, and Great Outdoors Colorado with the goal of providing a meaningful level of public access to the property by 2021.

Investing in operations, maintenance and customer service

CPW provides excellent facilities and first class customer service throughout its state parks. Towards that end, in FY 2019, CPW invested over \$8.7 million to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at existing state parks. This is a 50% increase, and responds to the public's desire for recreation managers to prioritize long-term management and maintenance of existing infrastructure.³

Additionally in 2019, in response to customer demand, CPW:

- Began offering hangtag annual park passes, which can be moved between vehicles.
- Provided 40 self-service kiosks at 22 state parks. These new machines, which take credit cards and allow customers to purchase passes at any time of the day, are also more weather-resistant than the previous system and require less employee time to collect payment.
- Implemented a "reservation-only" system at 22 state parks. This new system allows campers to reserve a site 24/7, from six months in advance up until the day of their arrival, by logging on to cpwshop.com from a computer or smartphone or calling CPW.
- Partnered with Zipcar to include state park passes in vehicles located in the Denver and Boulder metro areas, allowing Zipcar members access to all state parks across Colorado.
- Added electric vehicle charging stations to four state parks.

Developing criteria to evaluate other new state parks

CPW developed criteria to evaluate other potential new state parks or parklands that are consistent with the vision and mission of CPW. The criteria, created with input from the public and partners, offer broad characteristics to evaluate properties in order to ensure they achieve this vision.

- Outstanding nature-based recreation
- Natural resource value and conservation
- Meets Colorado's needs
- Relevance and community value
- Financial sustainability

In 2020, CPW anticipates seeking nominations from staff, public and partners for properties to consider as future Colorado state parks.

"This is really big, not only for Trinidad but for the whole region and, quite frankly, all of Colorado."

- Jared Polis,
Governor of Colorado



³ 2019. Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. p. 4.

Goal 7: Reduce Maintenance Backlog and Repair for High Risk Dams

In addition to operating state parks and wildlife areas, providing outdoor recreation opportunities, and managing Colorado’s wildlife, CPW owns and operates more than 115 dams, the largest inventory of dams of any owner in the state. Water impounded by CPW’s dams is used for downstream irrigation, fish hatcheries’ operations, and a multitude of recreational activities including fishing, boating and swimming. However, public infrastructure and population centers are often located downstream, which increases the likelihood of devastating consequences in the event of a dam failure. As such, maintenance and rehabilitation of CPW’s dams is of paramount importance to CPW.

Rehabilitating High Risk Dams

In 2014, CPW undertook a Screening Level Risk Analysis (SLRA) to provide an overview of its dam’s risk profiles and to guide the prioritization of future projects. The SLRA found 18 of the dams to be in a “high hazard” condition, with a loss of human life expected in the event of dam failure. Another 16 dams are considered “significant hazards,” with major property damage expected in the event of failure. The average age of the 34 highest risk dams is 68 years old, with six of them over 100 years old.

Based largely on the loss of life potential in a failure, as well as risks to environmental and recreational resources, the SLRA further identified 11 dams in CPW’s portfolio that posed the highest risk. With the study’s findings, CPW developed a priority list of repair and renovation work to be done. Since the release of the SLRA’s findings, 3 additional dams were added to that list when routine safety inspections revealed conditions that surpassed an acceptable level of risk. Figure 3 highlights the dam hazard classification across the state.

Over the past 4 years (FY 2016 to FY 2019), CPW has committed \$28.5 million to rehabilitate high-risk dams, cutting in half the backlog on the 11 high-risk dams. To help manage the increased workload, CPW recently received approval from the General Assembly to hire four additional engineering personnel. One of the new employees will focus on cutting the backlog of urgently needed dam repairs. Work on three dams -- Willow Creek, Sylvan Lake and Beaver Park -- has been or will be completed this year. In addition, initial work on outlet structures has been completed at Trujillo Meadows and Rito Hondo, and further work will be performed in upcoming phases. Four dams are in the midst of design or alternative options studies -- Tarryall, Alberta Park, Haviland and Chief Creek #4. The total maintenance and repair estimate for all CPW dams is \$94.4 million. There are also costs to maintaining and rehabilitating dams posing a less critical risk. Over the past four years, CPW has awarded \$4.3 million for dam maintenance and \$800,000 for other dam improvements, reducing the repair backlog.

In 2016, CPW was awarded the National Rehabilitation Project of the Year by the Association of State Safety Officers for its work on Beaver Park. The Association noted “an aggressive overall project schedule was required to meet funding and operational requirements. The risks ... were compounded by a short construction season, challenging terrain, and more than half a dozen modifications to the dam over the past 100 years. CPW worked with other water users and dam owners in the San Luis Valley to establish a cooperative agreement to provide a basin-wide approach to effective manage water use during construction to the benefit of the greater community.”

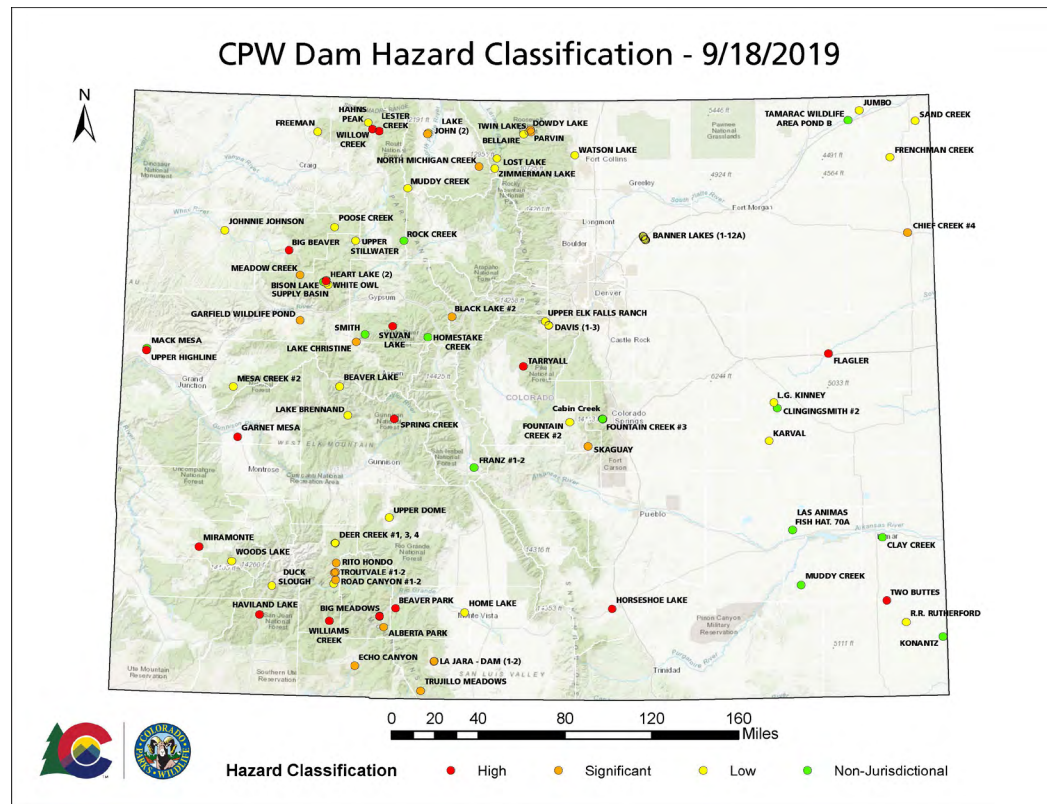


Fig. 3

Goal 8: Increase the Number of Fish Stocked and Renovate Fish Hatcheries

Since 1881, CPW's fish hatcheries have been dedicated to improving the fish populations of Colorado. Today, CPW operates 19 hatcheries that breed, hatch, rear and stock fish to enhance angling opportunities and serve a critical role in native species recovery.

Increasing Fish Production

In FY 2019, CPW's hatcheries produced over 97.8 million fish, a 6% increase. This includes 2.7 million catchable trout, 16.3 million sub-catchable trout, 272,000 non-game species, and 78.6 million warm water species. The state's hatchery system is operating at capacity, but a rapidly growing population and angler demand are outpacing production. The tight demand-supply situation is under further stress from recent drought conditions. In the face of reduced water supplies, several hatcheries have cut production or stocked fish at smaller sizes than desired. CPW intends to modernize the hatchery system to increase fish production.

Modernizing and Renovating the Hatchery System

CPW's aging hatchery system is in need of modernization and repair to continue to operate for the next 100+ years. In 2019, CPW began a multi-phase process to modernize its hatchery program. In Phase 1, CPW allocated \$50,000 to hire a consultant to analyze the fish-stocking program. In Phase 2, which is expected to be up and running by early 2020, \$300,000 has been allocated for a consultant to analyze the effectiveness of the current hatchery system. Finally, in Phase 3, a consultant will design modernization plans for CPW hatcheries and make recommendations about which hatcheries to modernize.

In the meantime, CPW is increasing investments in its existing hatcheries. In FY 2019, \$1.3 million was awarded for hatchery maintenance, renovation and modernization. This represents a 10% increase in funding in comparison to FY 2018.

Goal 9: Reduce Large Capital Construction Backlog

Providing appropriate facilities and infrastructure is also an important part of facilitating premier outdoor recreation experiences. CPW manages more than 1,400 facilities statewide, ranging from small storage sheds to 30,000 square foot hatcheries. All of the facilities contribute to operations at Colorado's 41 (soon to be 42) state parks, 350 state wildlife areas, 19 fish hatcheries, 700 miles of trails and more. Buildings, shooting ranges, dams, trails and other constructed facilities, provide opportunities for recreation, education and research. However, there is no doubt that CPW's facilities, like any other, need continuous upkeep and maintenance, and even replacement after a certain point.

Reduce capital construction and maintenance backlog

CPW is increasing its investment in capital construction, allocating \$17.6 million to large capital construction and \$6.1 million to small capital construction for parks and wildlife in FY 2019.⁴

As previously mentioned, CPW recently received approval from the General Assembly to hire four additional engineering personnel. One of the new employees will focus on cutting the backlog of urgently needed dam repairs. A second position will start work on a major overhaul of CPW's hatchery system, with the goal of maintaining production while at the same time increasing hatchery efficiency and reducing operating costs. Two additional staff will focus on regional projects such as parks upgrades and building repairs. Accelerating the maintenance schedule will extend the useful life of assets and cut the number of costly emergency repairs that grow and become more frequent with a building's age.

Additionally, CPW is working to determine the backlog of maintenance needs to better allow for budgeting and planning in the short- and long-term. To help accomplish this goal, staff are working to develop an inventory of park buildings and facilities and determine the existing condition of these assets.



⁴ Note: this includes money allocated to hatchery modernization as mentioned in Goal 8 and internal shooting ranges as mentioned in Goal 1.

In FY 19, work focused on documenting the underground utilities for 18 parks. In the meantime, CPW is committing resources to address obvious or long-term maintenance issues.

Two examples are:

- **Mueller State Park Campground Renovations:** The 132 campsites at Mueller State Park face high demand and are typically completely full from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Camping fees account for approximately 66% of park revenues. However, due to the mountainous terrain at the park, many of the campsites were built on ridges, using highly erosive decomposed granite to level the sites. Over the years park staff built timber retaining walls in an effort to slow or stop erosion and maintain the size of the campsites, without total success. A FY 2019 project will renovate 20 of the campsites, cutting erosion loss and restoring campsites to their original footprint. Two of the sites will be upgraded to meet accessibility requirements. When complete, the project will improve camper safety, cut maintenance costs of temporary fixes, and reduce the environmental impact from the erosion of decomposed granite.
- **Gunnison Area Office:** The current CPW Area Office in Gunnison is a converted residential structure that no longer meets customer and staff needs. Customers must wait outside during high visitation periods such as big game season. Staff conditions are overcrowded and fire and safety hazards (e.g., blocked exits) arise even during less congested times. Redesign and remodeling of the building will improve customer service, make for a more positive customer experience, and address safety issues.

Goal 10: Reduce the Need to List Additional Species

Conserving non-game wildlife is one of CPW's most important goals, however historically this work has depended on unpredictable grant funding.

Investing in non-game species conservation

In FY 2019, CPW spent almost \$8.9 million on non-game species conservation. This includes work to protect and recover species such as black-footed ferret, greater sage grouse, greenback cutthroat trout, boreal toad, Arkansas darter, and the southwestern willow flycatcher. Also in 2019, CPW staff secured funding for several projects to help manage and monitor Colorado's species of greatest conservation need. These funds will be used to continue implementation of sylvatic plague management to benefit prairie dogs and associated species; to establish a landowner incentive program to benefit black-footed ferrets; to support long-term population monitoring of bats and black-tailed prairie dogs; and to provide programmatic support for the Resource Stewardship Program and the Colorado Natural Areas Program. CPW is also continuing its work to evaluate the reintroduction of the wolverine.

Investing in wetlands conservation

Although only accounting for 2 percent of Colorado's land area, wetlands and riparian habitat provide crucial benefits -- including feeding, resting and rearing habitat -- to a wide range of wildlife species in the state. Unfortunately, an estimated one-half of Colorado's wetlands have been lost.

CPW's Wetlands Program awards grants annually on a competitive basis to CPW staff and partners for wetland and riparian restoration projects. Projects are conducted on State Wildlife Areas, State Parks, and other public and private lands. Projects that benefit Tier 1 and 2 at-risk wildlife species from the State Wildlife Action Plan, along with waterfowl, are a priority for funding.



In FY 2019, 10 Wetlands Program grants totaling \$1.9 million were awarded, helping to conserve 900 acres of wetlands in Colorado. While the number of grants lags the historic average, FY 2019 funding was directed to several highly-engineered projects involving water delivery infrastructure to manage wetland hydrology, projects that are typically more costly. And funding awarded was double the average of the previous three years. Included among the 19 project partners are the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Central Colorado Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, and the Upper Gunnison Conservancy District.

A project on the Elliott State Wildlife Area (SWA) in Morgan County is illustrative of work done through Wetlands Program grants. The Elliott SWA hosts a complex of 15 shallow wetlands that are flooded twice a year to benefit spring migratory waterfowl and for public recreation in the fall. Unfortunately, many of the basins contain deep, scoured areas that pool deep water, limiting flow-through in the complex and limiting foraging and roosting values for non-game migratory birds and waterfowl, and hunter use.

Ducks Unlimited partnered with CPW to regrade the 15 impoundments, covering approximately 200 acres. The project resulted in better water dispersal and additional flooded habitat, increasing habitat acres, improving recreational opportunities and efficient water use.

Partnering with private landowners in pursuit of mutual goals

The management of privately held lands and associated water rights is critical to maintaining robust wildlife populations in Colorado. Many native species, including lesser prairie chicken and burrowing owls, are highly dependent on private land, and about half of Colorado's greater sage grouse and Gunnison sage grouse rely on private landowners.

Towards that end, in 2019, CPW biologists ended a four-year project to reintroduce hundreds of lesser prairie chickens to Southeast Colorado. The target recovery area includes the Comanche National Grassland in Baca County, Colorado and the Cimarron National Grassland in Morton County, Kansas, as well as privately-owned rangeland and Conservation Reserve Program grasslands. Over the past four years, CPW biologists have relocated 103 males and 102 females in Colorado and 101 males and 105 females in Kansas, making this the largest known translocation effort for lesser prairie chickens. CPW biologists will now monitor their movements for the next two years, using solar powered, GPS backpacks that transmit the chickens' location 10 times a day.

Similarly public-private partnerships are helping with prairie dog and black-footed ferret conservation efforts. For example, in 2019, CPW worked with partners on Gary and Georgia Walker's cattle ranch in Pueblo County to distribute plague vaccine hidden inside peanut butter pellets. The vaccine pellets are eaten by black-tailed prairie dogs and provide them with a resistance to the plague virus. Prairie dogs are important to the ecosystem, in that they create habitats for other species, such as endangered black-footed ferrets and burrowing owls and are critical to the diets of many animals. The Walkers were the first ranchers in Colorado to choose to allow the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets on their land.

Additionally, staff have worked with partners in many planning processes, such as recovery planning for Gunnison sage grouse, and species status assessments for white-tailed ptarmigan and black rail. Long-term monitoring programs continue to be implemented for birds species (through the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions Program (IMBCR)) and for bats (through the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat)). Monitoring continues for lynx in southwestern Colorado and for grouse species through annual lek counts. Finally, translocation of greater sage grouse from North Park to the North Eagle/South Routt population continued and is scheduled to be completed in 2020.



Impact on License Sales

As the table below highlights, in FY 2019, CPW sold 358,000 big game hunting licenses, a 1% increase from the baseline average. In addition, in FY 2019, CPW sold 360,000 other licenses (including combination hunting/fishing licenses). This is a 67% increase from the baseline, and is likely attributable to the introduction of the qualifying license requirement in 2019. This change requires all applicants hold a qualifying license in the current license year prior to applying for the big game draw. Qualifying licenses include resident and non-resident spring turkey and annual small game, as well as resident annual combination small game/fishing and resident Veteran's lifetime combination small game/fishing license. Finally, in FY 2019, CPW sold 1,005,000 fishing licenses. This is a 16% decrease from the baseline average. While this may, in part, be due to the increase in fishing license prices, it also likely reflects a delay in the timing of fishing license purchases due to cooler late spring and early summer weather.

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	Reporting Year 1	Year 1 Data	% Change (from baseline)
# big game hunting licenses sold	3-year average of FY 15-16, FY 16-17, FY 17-18	354,000	FY 18-19	358,000	1%
# other hunting licenses sold (including combination licenses)	3-year average of FY 15-16, FY 16-17, FY 17-18	216,000	FY 18-19	360,000	67% ⁵
# fishing licenses sold	17, FY 17-18	1,164,000	FY 18-19	1,005,000	-16%



⁵ Increase is likely attributable to the introduction of the qualifying license requirement in 2019

Appendix 1: Reporting Requirements for the Future Generations Act

The Hunting, Fishing and Parks for Future Generations Act was signed into law on May 4, 2018. It grants the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission the authority to enact modest increases to state park entrance fees and increase prices for in-state hunting and fishing licenses. The new revenue derived from this authority will allow CPW to begin to address projected funding shortfalls of \$30 million annually for wildlife and \$11 million annually for parks by 2025.

The Act specifies 10 goals to fulfill by 2025, including:

- I. Increasing the number of hunters and anglers in Colorado in the face of national declines in hunting and fishing numbers through investments in recruitment programs, such as hunter education and Fishing is Fun, the development of the Cameo Shooting and Education Complex, and grants for shooting ranges in all regions of the state;
- II. Partnering with stakeholders to develop strategies to engage all outdoor recreationists, including hikers, bikers, climbers, and wildlife watchers, in funding the division and commission, maintenance of state lands and facilities, and management of wildlife;
- III. Recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources;
- IV. Supporting access programs on public and private lands, including the renewal of existing high-priority leases that provide public access for hunters, anglers, and outdoor recreationists;
- V. Increasing and improving the state's big game populations through investments in habitat and conservation, including increased support for highway wildlife crossings to protect animals and motorists;
- VI. Identifying and beginning to plan the development of a new Colorado state park and investing in other initiatives to increase park visitation, maintain excellent customer service, and generate revenue;
- VII. Reducing the \$44.76 million maintenance and repair backlog by 50% for the 11 dams owned and operated by the division that pose the highest risks to life and property and establishing an appropriate funding stream to continue maintenance of all of the division's 110 dams;
- VIII. Increasing the number of fish stocked in Colorado water to more than 90 million through the development of a statewide hatchery modernization plan, renovation of one of the state's 19 fish hatcheries, and reduction in the maintenance backlog for all hatcheries, many of which are 70 to 100 years old;
- IX. Reducing the division's known \$26 million large capital construction and maintenance backlog by 50% and establishing a capital development backlog strategic plan to provide a stable funding stream to address future maintenance projects at state wildlife areas and state parks; and
- X. Reducing the need to list additional state trust species under the federal "Endangered Species Act of 1973", 16 U.S.C. sec. 1531 et seq., by partnering with private landowners to improve species distribution and abundance monitoring and disease prevention efforts. (Section 2 (1)).

It also specifies the following reporting requirements:

BY NOVEMBER 1, 2019, AND BY EACH NOVEMBER 1 OF EACH YEAR THEREAFTER, THE DIVISION SHALL PREPARE A WRITTEN REPORT ON:

(A) THE IMPACT THAT LICENSE FEE INCREASES, AS ESTABLISHED ON THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS SECTION OR BY THE COMMISSION PURSUANT TO SECTION 33-4-102 (1.5)(a), HAVE HAD ON THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SALES OF LICENSES;

(B) AN ACCOUNTING OF PROGRAM EXPENDITURES MADE WITH THE INCREASED FEES AND THE IMPACT OF THOSE EXPENDITURES ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DIVISION'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 2 OF SENATE BILL 18-143, ENACTED IN 2018; AND

(C) A LIST OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT, IN THE PREVIOUS TWELVE MONTHS, RECEIVED GRANT MONEY FROM THE SALE OF STATE MIGRATORY WATERFOWL STAMPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT PLAN PURSUANT TO SECTION 33-4-102.5 (3)(b) AND AN EXPLANATION OF EACH GRANT AWARD MADE.

(II) THE DIVISION SHALL MAKE THE REPORT AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC AND SHALL SEND EACH REPORT TO THE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND ENERGY COMMITTEE IN THE SENATE, OR THEIR SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES.

(b) ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1, 2022, AND ON OR BEFORE MARCH 1, 2025, THE DIVISION SHALL PRESENT ITS FINDINGS FROM, AND A SUMMARY OF, ITS MOST RECENT REPORT PREPARED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (1)(a) OF THIS SECTION TO A JOINT SESSION OF THE AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND ENERGY COMMITTEE IN THE SENATE, OR THEIR SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES.

(2) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025. (33-4-121(1)(a)(I))

Appendix 2: Colorado Waterfowl Stamp Fund Grants

Goal 10 discusses CPW's Wetlands Program grant awards made annually on a competitive basis to CPW and partner organizations for wetland and riparian restoration work. These projects are conducted on State Wildlife Areas, State Parks, and other public and private lands. Projects that benefit Tier 1 and 2 at-risk wildlife species from the State Wildlife Action Plan, along with waterfowl, are a priority for funding. In FY 2019, 10 grants were awarded, helping to conserve 900 acres of wetlands in Colorado.

For Colorado Waterfowl Stamp funds specifically, revenue from increasing the price of the Colorado Waterfowl Stamp will become available in March 2020 after the current waterfowl license year ends. As a result of this delayed income, no money was allocated to non-profit organizations using waterfowl stamp funds in FY 2019. Revenue granted to non-profit organizations using Waterfowl Stamp Funds will be reported in the next Future Generations Act reporting cycle in November 2020.



Schendel/CPW



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