

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

# Future Generations Act Report 2023



OCTOBER 2023



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# Letter from the Director

I am pleased to share CPW's progress on the 10 goals of the Hunting, Fishing, and Parks for Future Generations Act (Senate Bill 18-143) in this fifth annual report. The work toward fulfilling these goals is also a continuation of the mission we've served for more than 125 years. The agency's dedicated staff have used their time and talents to perpetuate the wildlife resources of Colorado, provide a quality state parks system, and provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of our natural resources.

In the last year, CPW continued to increase the number of hunters and anglers in Colorado 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. The number of fishing license holders and hunting license holders have increased over the five-year period from 2017-2021.

We're recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources. The agency made significant changes to the hiring process for the park manager and wildlife officer positions. In 2021, CPW's process took approximately eight months from when positions were announced to when new employees were hired. In 2022, CPW reduced the time from job announcement to when conditional job offers were made to just 1.5 months. As a result of these efforts, CPW saw significant growth in the number of people who applied for the park ranger and wildlife manager positions in 2022.

CPW continues to support 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. Last year, we awarded 16 non-motorized trail grants totaling nearly \$2 million, five Land and Water Conservation Fund grants for community projects totaling nearly \$4.6 million, 60 off-highway vehicle (OHV) grants totaling over \$6.2 million, and 32 snowmobile grants totaling nearly \$1.2 million.

We're 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. CPW is committed to protecting big game herds by maintaining habitat connectivity and working to remove migration barriers that may exist. The Habitat Conservation Unit has been working to develop its first Statewide Habitat Conservation and Connectivity Plan (SHCCP), which they hope to finalize by June 2024.

We're identifying and beginning to plan the development of new Colorado state park areas and investing in other initiatives to maintain excellent customer service and quality park facilities. The agency is currently building out Fishers Peak State Park, Colorado Clays State Recreation Area and investing in operations, maintenance and customer service.

CPW is reducing the \$44.76 million maintenance and repair backlog for 11 of the dams owned and operated by the agency. We're making dam rehabilitation a priority by allocating capital construction funds to dam improvement projects ahead of any other capital construction projects.

We're 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.

We're 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. Funding from the General Assembly in 2021 added \$20 million of General Fund dollars (Senate Bill 21-112) to support parks infrastructure projects to provide facility and public access improvements at 12 parks statewide by expanding or enhancing facilities that are seeing a great deal of public use.

We're reducing the need to list additional state trust species under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 by partnering with private landowners to improve species distribution, abundance monitoring and disease prevention efforts. In Fiscal Year 2023, CPW spent almost \$12.2 million on the conservation of non-game species and habitat through research, population status monitoring, reintroduction, habitat protection and restoration benefiting threatened and endangered species.

Our staff works tirelessly to ensure that the Colorado we all enjoy today will remain available and enjoyable for future generations to come. We thank you for your trust in Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and for allowing us to serve you and our state's land, waters and wildlife. We are proud to present the 2023 Future Generations Act Report.

Regards,



Jeff Davis

Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife





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# Executive Summary

With the passage of the Hunting, Fishing, and Parks for Future Generations Act (Act) by the Colorado General Assembly in 2018 (Senate Bill 18-143), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) committed to fulfilling 10 goals by 2025:

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;

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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;

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3. Recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources;

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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;

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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;

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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;

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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;

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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

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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)).

## Goal progress baselining and tracking

Following the narrative description of the activities undertaken during Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 for each of the ten goals, a Metric Summary Table provides a snapshot of specific data CPW tracks year-over-year to ground our work in measurable and reportable ways. The metric table includes baseline data which, in most cases, is the average of three fiscal years: FY 2016, FY 2017, and FY 2018. In certain cases, a new metric was added since the writing of the first Future Generations Act Report in FY 2019, or includes a data point not previously tracked. The summary tables contain data for the previous fiscal year, FY 2023, and present increases or decreases from the baseline data to help understand changes over time.



# Goal 1: Increasing the Number of Hunters and Anglers

Hunters and anglers are major contributors to wildlife and habitat conservation in Colorado. Hunting and angling are also important aspects of Colorado's economy, heritage, and necessary tools used to manage and propagate fish and wildlife populations across the state. Each year, around 1.4 million hunters and anglers contribute around \$3.2 billion of combined economic benefit to the state and over 25,000 jobs.

As of 2021 (the last year for which data on individual license holders has been reported), there were nearly 950,000 Colorado fishing license holders, a 9% increase over the baseline values, and over 393,000 Colorado hunting license holders, a 34% increase over the baseline values. From 2017-2021, the number of fishing license holders has followed a generally increasing trend, with a peak in license holders in 2020 and a slight downturn in 2021. Meanwhile, hunting participation has maintained a consistently increasing trend. CPW continues its work to increase hunting and fishing participation through investments in outreach programs, education, and grants.

## Expanding hunter and angler education and outreach

CPW provides high-quality hunter education programming that acquaints new hunters to CPW, instills responsible hunting skills and ethics, and fulfills the statutory requirements for future hunters to successfully complete a mandated educational program. CPW offers hunter education classes across the state in two formats: online with an in-person component and traditional in-person classroom instruction.

In FY 2023, CPW offered 463 in-person hunter education courses. Of these, 205 were standard courses, 241 were internet conclusion courses, which are shorter in-person classes following the online course, and 17 were bowhunter education courses. In all, more than 12,280 students attended a hunter education course in Colorado during FY 2023. While this is a significant increase from FY 2022, when around 9,520 students attended an in-person hunter education course, the number of students participating is still not as high as it was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This may be a result of offering fewer courses, as fewer instructors have returned to teaching after the pandemic. It also may be due to increasing "no-show" rates for students. The Hunter Education Program is looking at ways to ensure that more people show up for their class and have the ability to attend a local class.

The passage of a new law that allows public or charter schools to offer hunter education courses during seventh grade has made it easier for schools to offer hunter education as a part of their curriculum. However, not many schools have opted into the program thus far. The Hunter Education Program is working to develop a specific hunter education program that is catered to seventh graders to help increase participation.

CPW's Hunter Outreach Program seeks to recruit, retain, and reactivate new, non-traditional, and lapsed hunters through clinics, seminars, advice, mentored hunts and online educational content. Hunter outreach programming is designed specifically to appeal to diverse interests and levels of ability. In FY 2023, CPW's Hunter Outreach Program reached over 7,200 participants across the state through more than 130 events, including seminars, clinics and webinars. In addition, the program facilitated 105 mentored hunts, providing 484 hunters a unique hunting experience.

CPW staff offered fewer hunter outreach events in FY 2023 than previous years, likely due to the increasing "no-show" rate for participants. Among other ideas to increase participation, staff are interested in creating a Hunter Outreach newsletter with updated information on application periods, new seminars and clinics, and other tips.

Another hunter outreach effort is the Take a Friend Hunting Program, which provides incentives for current hunters to accompany a new or lapsed hunter in the field by documenting their experience through pictures and a brief essay. During FY 2023, 17 pairs of mentors and mentees were awarded prizes. CPW also offers a Novice Adult Outreach License (NAOL) that provides adults who are new to hunting an opportunity to participate in select mentored hunts. In FY 2023, CPW received 204 NAOL applications, among which 58 were for the Women Afield Program, targeting new women hunters. CPW also provides similar opportunities to youth through the Youth Outreach License (YOL), and received 94 YOL applications in FY 2023.

CPW's Angler Education Program promotes the state's aquatic resources and encourages people to enjoy the outdoors responsibly through fishing. Oftentimes angler outreach events are focused on first time anglers, families, or a new technique of fishing. In FY 2023, CPW staff and angler outreach volunteers held 278 fishing clinics or events around the state, reaching approximately 8,780 anglers, a slight 3% drop off in attendance from FY 2022. In FY 2023, the Angler Education Program started hosting more large-scale events with hundreds of participants like Get Outdoors Day, Dia de Pesca (Hispanic Fishing Day) made possible through the Vamos A Pesca Grant, and St. Vrain State Park's Fishing Experience. Staff will reevaluate participation levels after FY 2024 to determine if any changes are needed in staffing or approach.



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<sup>1</sup> This corresponds to US Fish and Wildlife Service Reporting Year 2023.



## Increasing grants for Fishing is Fun

The Fishing is Fun Program provides grants annually to local and county governments, parks and recreation departments, water districts, and angling organizations for projects to improve angling in Colorado. Fishing is Fun grant awards are matched by local funds, along with in-kind services, materials and volunteer time, often covering 40-50% of project costs.

In FY 2023, CPW awarded nearly \$598,600 to five Fishing is Fun projects that aim to revitalize aquatic ecosystems and improve angling opportunities across the state (Figure 1). The projects this year focused on American Disability Act (ADA) access, with three of the projects creating ADA-accessible fishing piers. Many applications came from communities on Colorado's Eastern plains to help improve fishing access within those small towns.

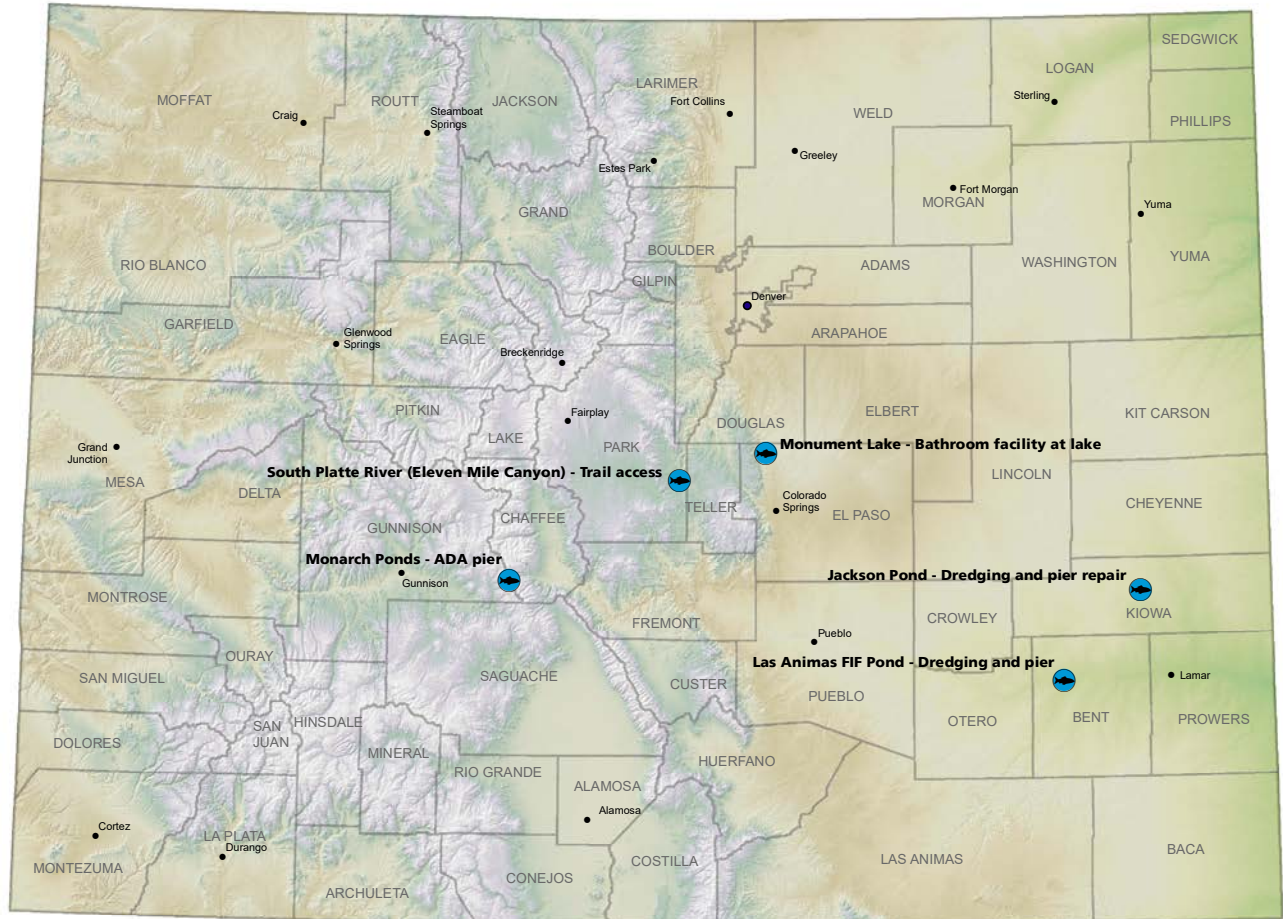
Funding for around \$420,000 of the grant awards came from the Federal Sport Fish Restoration Program, which comes from excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel. The projects awarded funding in FY 2023 include:

- ▶ **Town of Monument:** funding will support the development of a bathroom facility at the lake
- ▶ **Monarch Ponds:** funding will support an ADA-accessible pier
- ▶ **Las Animas:** funding will support dredging and a pier
- ▶ **Kiowa County:** funding will support dredging and pier repair
- ▶ **Coalition for the Upper South Platte:** funding will support trail access on Eleven Mile Canyon



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Figure 1: 2023 Fishing is Fun Projects





## Developing the Cameo Shooting and Education Complex

The Cameo Shooting and Education Complex (CSEC) is a world-class educational and training facility as well as a top destination for people to participate in organized shooting competitions, sharpen their skills, or learn about the safe use of firearms. During FY 2023, CSEC hosted 354 permitted events, including competitions and training classes. They had over 19,800 paid visitors, including nearly 14,500 members of the general public who “walked in,” and nearly 5,400 event attendees.

Some notable successes at CSEC in FY 2023 include hosting the annual A Girl and A Gun’s National Conference, where over 700 women from all 50 states came for a week of classes, bringing substantial revenue to the local community. Cameo is also branching into hosting new events, such as the Ultimate Hunter Shooting Sports, which involve realistic hunting based-scenario competitions including rifle, archery, rimfire, handgun and muzzleloader platforms. CSEC has also developed a new hunter training program called The Hunter Field Engagement Course, which gives participants the opportunity to learn how to engage targets in natural field conditions at ethical hunting distances using common hunting rifles.

The latest fiscal year also presented major challenges. Following the implementation of a requirement that visitors sign a “participation agreement” related to magazine capacity, CSEC lost many regional, national and international competitions, with significant impacts on CSEC’s revenue. During FY 2023, two major events still took place, but neither of these events will return in subsequent years, significantly reducing attendance and revenue for the facility. CSEC staff is moving forward with plans to diversify its activities into rifle, archery and shotgun sports events, which are not impacted by the new requirements.

Also during FY 2023, eight new event bays with shelters were constructed, the long range rifle facility was soundproofed and three storage structures for group rental gear were added. Design for Phase II of CSEC is nearing completion and includes plans for the construction of a large visitor center with classrooms, indoor ranges, natural history museum, native plant species botanical garden, retail pro-shop, eatery, fishing pond and wetlands area, outdoor education laboratory and playground.





## Expanding grants for shooting ranges

CPW's Shooting Range Development Grant (SRDG) Program focuses on establishing new shooting ranges and expanding or improving existing ranges across Colorado by providing matching grants to towns, counties, outdoor recreation organizations, shooting clubs, and others. In FY 2023, CPW awarded nearly \$1,124,400 through ten different projects across the state including:

- ▶ Range improvements with Grand County Archers, the Logan County Shooting Sports Complex, and Pikes Peak Gun Club.
- ▶ Archery range development with the Lamar Archery Range and the City of Aspen.
- ▶ Clubhouse construction with the Cedaredge Rod & Gun Club and clubhouse roof replacement with the Delta Trap Club.
- ▶ LED lighting improvements with the Grand Junction Trap Club.
- ▶ Shade shelter construction with the Teller County Shooting Society.

CPW also administers the Small Shooting Range Grant (SSRG) Program, which offers grants of up to \$5,000 per project for improvements at Colorado shooting ranges that allow hunter education courses, public sight-in days, and youth and family involvement in the shooting sports. The program enhances safety and increases public access to shooting ranges through smaller capital improvements, upgrades, replacement, and repair of existing shooting range features. In FY 2023, CPW awarded six grants totaling about \$33,700 to ranges across the state. SSRG projects funded in FY 2023 include:

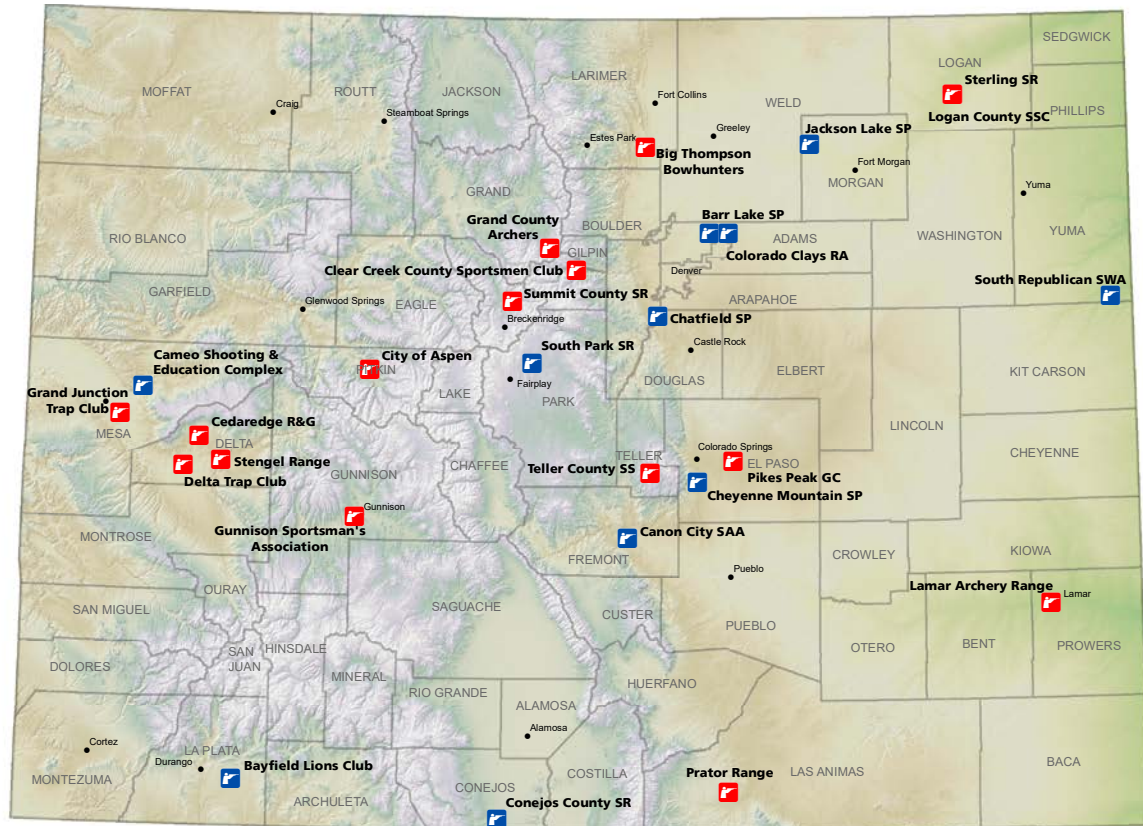
- ▶ Replacement of the straw bale backstops at Dennis Hansen Range at Lon Hagler State Wildlife Area in Loveland.
- ▶ Construction and installation of new shooting benches at Logan County Shooting Sports Complex.
- ▶ Manufacture and installation of shotgun racks for the new trap range for the Gunnison Sportsmen's Association.
- ▶ Repairs to the warming hut roof and the installation of a shade cover at Stengel Gun Shop and Range.
- ▶ Heavy equipment rental to clear vegetation and replacement of targets at the Summit County Archery Range.
- ▶ Replacement of existing shooting benches at Prator Range at Trinidad State Junior College.

CPW also operates ranges on some state wildlife areas (SWA) and state park (SP) properties. In FY 2023, CPW allocated \$1,000,000 toward 12 archery and shooting range projects on CPW properties across the state. Among the improvements funded in FY 2023 are:

- ▶ Adding 3D archery targets and completing other archery range improvements at Barr Lake State Park.
- ▶ Purchasing equipment and completing other improvements at Colorado Clays Recreation Area.
- ▶ Replacing the South Park Shooting Range fence.
- ▶ Constructing an archery outreach trailer at Chatfield State Park.

Figure 2 shows the location of all of the FY 2023 funded Shooting Range Development Grant projects and CPW range projects.

Figure 2: 2023 Shooting Range Development Grants



## 2023 Shooting Range Development Grants



- ▶ External
- ▶ Internal





**TABLE 1**

**GOAL #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.**

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Baseline Year</b>	<b>Baseline Data</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)</b>
Number of fishing license holders reported to USFWS	3-year average of FWS Reporting Year 2017/18/19	871,000	950,000	9%
Number of hunting license holders reported to USFWS	3-year average of FWS Reporting Year 2017/18/19	294,000	393,000	34%
Participants in Hunter Outreach activities	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	4,500	7,203	60%
Participants in Angler Outreach activities	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	7,500	8,777	17%
Number of Angler Outreach clinics	FY19	150	278	85%
Number of Hunter Outreach events	FY19	240	131	-45%
Number of in-person Hunter Education courses offered	FY20	403	463	15%
Participants in Hunter Education courses (in-person and online-only)	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	16,800	12,281	-27%
Number of mentored hunts (CPW and Hunt Master Program)	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	100	105	5%
Number of hunters in mentored hunts	FY20	444	484	9%
Amount awarded for Fishing is Fun grants	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$400,000	\$598,575	50%
Number of Fishing is Fun grants awarded	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	8	5	-38%
Number of paid public visitors to CSEC	FY19	2,814	19,843	605%
Number of event attendees at CSEC	FY19	1,693	5,384	218%
Number of competitions held at CSEC	FY19	61	354	480%
Amount awarded for large shooting range grants	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$545,000	\$1,124,381	106%
Number of large shooting range grants awarded	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	8	10	25%
Amount awarded for small shooting range grants	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$47,000	\$33,646	-28%
Number of small shooting range grants awarded	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	8	6	-25%
Number of range projects grants on CPW properties	FY19	13	12	-8%
Amount awarded for range projects on CPW properties	FY18	\$477,000	\$1,000,000	110%



# Goal 2: Partnering with Stakeholders to Engage All Outdoor Recreationists

Developing and sustaining partnerships with outdoor recreationists as well as increasing CPW’s relevance in the lives of all Coloradans helps to ensure that sufficient resources are available to fulfill our mission. CPW continues to cultivate new partnerships, strengthen existing partnerships, expand our reach, and explore and implement sustainable funding mechanisms.

## Strengthening partnerships with stakeholders

CPW’s Partners Program is an outward-facing effort that brings together diverse interests from across the state, representing a large spectrum of the outdoor industry, in support of the agency’s mission to manage wildlife, provide a quality state parks system, and inspire people to be active stewards of Colorado’s natural resources. The Partners Program helps to foster alignment, awareness and trust among CPW and its many partners.

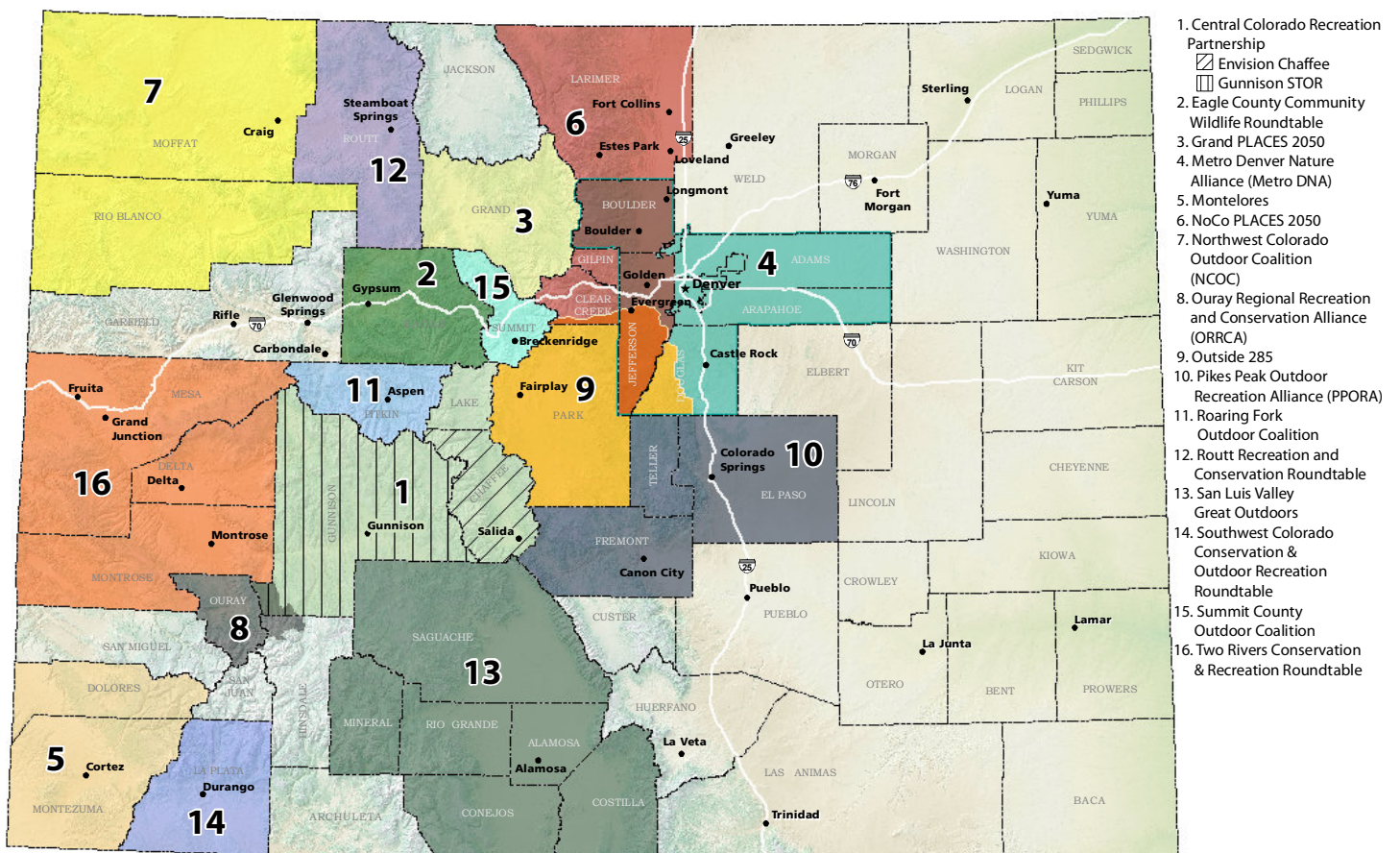
CPW chose to step back from hosting the 2023 Partners in the Outdoors Conference and instead took the year to engage with partners, listen, and better understand how CPW can collectively work with the partner network towards common goals. In FY 2023, Partners Program staff are working with Civic Consulting Collaborative (CCC) to host listening sessions and virtual engagements to strengthen overall partner relationships across

the state. CCC facilitated six listening sessions for partners in August 2023. CCC is also conducting a gap analysis of existing partners and more in-depth interviews with partners. A virtual survey was also sent out recently to better understand CPW’s partner network.

However, CPW recently announced the 2023 Partners in the Outdoors grant awards. In 2023, 38 organizations were funded for a total of over \$274,400. All projects are collaborative in nature and address the priority areas identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). A full list of the 2023 Grant Awardees can be found [here](#).

Within CPW’s Partners Program also exists the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP). The CO-OP is a collaboration of organizations representing the intersection of conservation and outdoor recreation and interests related to land, water, and wildlife in Colorado. In the spring of 2023, CPW announced the recipients of the fourth round of Outdoor Regional Partnership grant funding, bringing the number of regional partnerships up to 16 (Figure 3). CPW also hosted an annual Outdoor Partnership Summit in April 2023 to share best practices and enhance alignment across regional and statewide planning efforts with 100% participation among regional partnerships.

Figure 3: Colorado Regional Partnerships





The spring 2023 grant recipients include:

- ▶ Envision Chaffee County
- ▶ Metro Denver Nature Alliance
- ▶ Montelores Coalition
- ▶ NoCo PLACES 2050 (Northern Colorado People, Land, Access, Conservation, Ecosystems, and Sustainability)
- ▶ Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance
- ▶ Routt Recreation & Conservation Roundtable
- ▶ San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLV GO!)
- ▶ Southwest Colorado Conservation & Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
- ▶ Two Rivers Recreation and Conservation Roundtable

**Growing new sources of funding**

CPW and the Department of Natural Resources continue to explore sustainable funding streams and ways to increase the agency’s relevance in the lives of all Coloradans. The Keep Colorado Wild (KCW) Pass Act, which Governor Polis signed into law on June 21, 2021, is a significant change to the way Colorado’s state parks are funded. Starting on January 1, 2023, the Keep Colorado Wild Pass is available to Coloradans when they register their vehicles, and grants access to all Colorado state parks. After just the first six months, over 769,000 Coloradans have the Keep Colorado Wild Pass, which is about 30% of the total eligible vehicle registrations generating over \$22 million.

Additionally, over the last two years CPW has made consistent progress towards formalizing a Philanthropy Program. This effort includes both raising funds and distributing donated funds in support of agency programs and projects. Staff continue to build awareness and educate the public about CPW’s activities and funding structure. They have also created informational websites that encourage and streamline the donation process. Encouraging donations through events has also been successful. The CPW On Tap events, which were held at participating breweries in conjunction with celebrations for the 125th Anniversary of CPW, helped contribute funds and also encouraged engagement in communities across the state.

Staff have also been working with OIT and other internal stakeholders to implement a comprehensive software system to better support fundraising efforts, as well as streamline the internal process for accepting donations and distributing funds. More than half of the donations CPW currently receives are restricted to specific programs. For the remaining unrestricted funds, a two-channel system is being established to distribute these funds, including an internal application process whereby staff can apply to fund projects with donor dollars.

All of these efforts have increased donor support consistently each year. In FY 2023, private donations totaled over \$860,000, a 125% increase from the baseline amount, and add-on or round-up donations added to license and pass purchases totaled over \$300,000, a 442% increase from the baseline amount.

Additional voluntary contributions include those made to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Cash Fund, which receives donations as a part of Colorado’s state income tax return. Known as the income tax checkoff, this program provides Coloradans an opportunity to make an investment in Colorado’s wildlife and habitats. Contributions from the income tax checkoff totaled almost \$252,500 in FY 2023, an increase of 25% over the baseline amount.

Finally, revenue received from the issuance and renewals of the Wildlife Sporting License Plate, a specialty license plate that allows vehicle owners to show their support for hunting, fishing, and wildlife recreation, totaled around \$646,300 in FY 2023, an increase of over 500% from the baseline. Revenue generated from license plate sales and renewals is used to fund grants through the Fishing is Fun Program and the Shooting Range Development Grant Program.

<b>TABLE 2</b>				
<b>GOAL #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;</b>				
<b>Metric</b>	<b>Baseline Year</b>	<b>Baseline Data</b>	<b>FY 2023</b>	<b>FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)</b>
Number of Partners in the Outdoors Conference Participants	FY18	518	0*	N/A
Number of organizations represented by Partners in the Outdoors Conference participants	FY18	234	0*	N/A
Amount of revenue received from “nongame and endangered wildlife cash fund” donations	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$199,918	\$252,475	26%
Amount of revenue received from round-up donations	FY20	\$55,403	\$300,196	442%
Amount of revenue received from private donations	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$382,000	\$860,040	125%
Revenue received from the issuance and renewals of the Wildlife Sporting License Plate	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$106,570	\$646,255	506%

\*CPW chose to step back from hosting a 2023 conference and instead took the year to engage with partners, listen, and better understand how CPW can collectively work with the partner network towards common goals.

# Goal 3: Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Employees

Managing Colorado's wildlife, parks and outdoor recreation resources requires the dedication of thousands of hard working staff, as well as volunteers who donate their time. Recruiting and retaining quality employees from diverse backgrounds is essential to achieving CPW's mission and strategic goals. DNR's commitment to its employees is reflected in its 7.4% turnover rate in FY 2023, one of the lowest employee turnover rates of all State agencies.

## Recruiting new employees

CPW is constantly looking at ways to improve its efforts around the recruitment of quality employees. During FY 2023, CPW's Organizational Development Section continued refining the channels to identify and engage prospective employees. CPW's recent recruitment efforts focused on enhancing long-term partnerships with external organizations.

In FY 2023, CPW continued its partnership with Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), a program serving underserved, culturally diverse youth in Arapahoe, Adams, and Denver counties. ELK's Urban Rangers worked side-by-side with CPW staff, where they gained natural resource professional development experience by learning about park management and visitor engagement. Similarly, CPW's partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) allowed youth participants to contribute 46 weeks of work at 18 state parks, 13 state wildlife areas, and three state fish hatcheries, all while learning about CPW's work. Additionally, the Section continues to identify ways to broaden and diversify its paid internship programs as a means to recruit future employees. Pilot partnerships with two partner organizations within the Youth Internship Program (YIP) were used to provide more pathways to employment within natural resource careers for young adults from historically under-represented groups in natural resources.

CPW continues to push for quality applicants in our recruitment efforts. Changes made in recent years, including broadening minimum qualifications and degree requirements, continue to open more opportunities for recruitment of talented employees, as well as have a noticeable impact on the number of applications received for important positions.

During FY 2023, there were 305 applicants that met minimum qualifications for the Park Manager I position, an increase of 172% over the baseline amount and 153 applicants that met minimum qualifications for the District Wildlife Manager I position, an increase of 61%. These positions had historically low numbers of applicants and have been hard to fill. Overall, the turnover rate at CPW was 6% which was lower than the turnover rate for DNR as an agency (inclusive of CPW) at 7.4%

## Retaining existing employees

CPW takes seriously the importance of investing in professional development and training for its employees as a way to retain and develop the workforce. The Organizational Development section works hard to make training and professional development available to all CPW staff members. CPW has partnered with FranklinCovey this past year to launch a blended learning platform of virtual facilitated training and self-directed content. The Daniels Leadership Program has continued with in-person training and expanded the number of available seats in the program to other Divisions within DNR. In conjunction with the Daniels Leadership Program, CPW has continued the series



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of monthly programs specifically for past graduates to keep the learning and relationships moving forward. CPW intends to involve past graduates in helping to design and implement an employee program that provides support and resources for new and current staff. The goal with this program is to eventually have peers in place for each job class represented. CPW is also working to develop and launch a peer support program centered around employee mental health.

## Increasing volunteer resources

Volunteerism is a cost-effective way to help manage Colorado's natural resources while cultivating stewardship and building stronger connections between CPW and local communities. CPW's volunteers are critical to achieving the agency's mission and serve in a variety of roles, such as camp hosting, education and outreach, community science, habitat and trail work, maintenance and construction, wildlife projects, customer service, and many more.

CPW's Volunteer Program provides recruitment, screening, training, retention, support and resources for state parks, wildlife areas, hatcheries, educational programs, and CPW administrative offices throughout Colorado. Ensuring the number of volunteers and their hours are tracked and reported consistently is a continuous challenge. In FY 2023, volunteer coordinators provided daily support to volunteers and staff to ensure they know how to use the volunteer database to track volunteer activity consistently and accurately. Staff also sent bi-annual, personalized "call-for-hours" emails to remind all volunteers to record their time. The Volunteer Database also includes tools that automatically calculate volunteer hours for scheduled activities and shifts.

For FY 2023, approximately 4,700 volunteers contributed 297,300

hours of time. This is an equivalent of 143 FTE and an economic impact of over \$10.2 million.

Developing staff skills and knowledge on how to best engage volunteers is essential to effectively achieve CPW's mission. During FY 2023, staff implemented three training opportunities, including: a full-day training on volunteer and partner engagement for 22 new park rangers and wildlife managers at the Calwood Education Center; the annual Education and Volunteer Training, which focused on deepening staff's tools and techniques for managing their volunteers with 50 attendees; and a session at the annual Seasonal Naturalist Training focused on volunteer management and inclusive programs for 40 attendees. Participants gave positive reviews of all three of the training opportunities.

Staff also conduct an annual volunteer and staff survey to assess experiences. The results help to inform statewide and regional strategies, such as how often to communicate with volunteers (monthly) and through what method (email), as well as how to recognize volunteers. In FY 2023, there were 954 volunteer respondents and 117 staff respondents. The results indicate that among volunteers:

- ▶ 92% enjoy volunteering with CPW
- ▶ 94% are satisfied with their experience
- ▶ 91% agree that their volunteer service is meaningful and makes a positive difference
- ▶ 91% would recommend volunteering with CPW to a friend or family member.

Additionally 58% of volunteer respondents purchased a hunting or fishing license, 42% purchased a state park pass, 47% purchased merchandise, 36% reserved campsites, and 29% donated via in-kind goods.

The results are similarly positive for staff indicating that:

- ▶ 87% agree that volunteers are partners in achieving their work
- ▶ 90% are satisfied with their experience working with volunteers
- ▶ 87% agree that volunteering helps people understand our mission and agency better.

Finally, staff sought to foster partnerships with volunteer organizations, agencies, and groups to actively recruit new volunteers. Among other activities in FY 2023, staff deepened the relationship with the Friends of State Parks groups and developed a new partnership with the Office of Information Technology to coordinate a series of volunteer projects across the state. Staff have also been working to establish a partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with the goal of placing people with disabilities in paid and volunteer positions with CPW.



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TABLE 3				
GOAL #3. Recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources				
Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Number of applicants for Park Manager position (that met minimum qualifications)	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	112	305	172%
Number of applicants for District Wildlife Manager (that met minimum qualifications)	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	95	153	61%
Number of applicants for Hatchery Technician (that met minimum qualifications)	FY19	251	<i>Data unavailable at time of publication</i>	N/A
Volunteer hours	FY18	303,853	297,305	-2%
Volunteers who enjoyed working with CPW per the Volunteer Satisfaction Survey (percent)	FY19	88%	92%	5%
Turnover rate (DNR)**	FY18	7.6%	7.4%	N/A

\*\* Year-to-year changes in DNR's turnover rate are not calculated. The figures shown represent the actual turnover rates.



# Goal 4: Supporting Access Programs on Public and Private Lands

Access to Colorado’s lands, waters, and open spaces for hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation opportunities is vital, contributing significantly to the state’s outstanding quality of life, legacy, and economic health. Increasing access to public and private lands for anglers, hunters, and all outdoor recreationists is an important priority for Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

## Expanding access through trails

Since its establishment in 1971, CPW’s Recreational Trails Program has actively encouraged the development of a variety of trails through a number of grant programs on an annual basis. Local, county, and state governments, federal agencies, special recreation districts, and non-profit organizations with management responsibilities over public lands may apply for and are eligible to receive non-motorized and motorized trail grants. CPW strives to enhance the experience of Colorado trail users by funding trail maintenance, enforcement, planning, and construction grants and increasing the number of hours of maintenance performed by trail crews. The State Trails Program continues to emphasize maintenance projects for both non-motorized and off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail grant projects to address the increased need to repair and improve existing trails and address resource impacts due to increased visitation on public lands. In FY 2023, they funded almost 148,500 trail crew hours through trail grants, exceeding the target of 145,000 hours. Also in FY 2023, CPW awarded:

- ▶ 16 non-motorized trail grants totaling nearly \$2 million,
- ▶ 5 Land and Water Conservation Fund grants for community projects totaling nearly \$4.6 million,
- ▶ 60 off-highway vehicle (OHV) grants totaling over \$6.2 million, and
- ▶ 32 snowmobile grants totaling nearly \$1.2 million.

## Expanding access to hunting and fishing

CPW partners with landowners to expand access to Colorado’s outdoors by acquiring public access easements for fishing and hunting on private land. Through the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP), an annual, incentive-based funding program, landowners have the opportunity to voluntarily protect important wildlife habitat and provide wildlife-related recreation access to the public. The program accomplishes strategic wildlife conservation goals and public access goals using conservation easements, public access easements, and in some circumstances, fee title acquisitions. In FY 2023, CPW funded conservation easements on 16,300 acres, acquired about 500 acres of fee title, and acquired public access on around 11,900 acres of private land. Through partnerships, the CWHP has helped protect hundreds of thousands of acres of critical wildlife habitat while maintaining working lands and providing public access for wildlife-related recreation opportunities to Colorado residents and nonresidents alike.

Hunters, anglers, and wildlife-recreation enthusiasts can also access Colorado’s lands through the Public Access Program (PAP). The PAP provides limited, seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities on Colorado Trust Lands across the state. State Trust Land enrolled in the PAP is open to a variety of wildlife-related uses and most are also working ranches leased for agriculture. After undertaking a large expansion of the PAP program in 2020 and 2021, enrollments in the PAP remained largely stable at around 966,600 acres. The large expansions in 2020 and 2021 doubled the amount of publicly accessible trust land from 478,000 in 2018.

Together with other CPW transactions outside of these programs, as of July 1, 2023, CPW held access rights to almost 1,675,100 acres for wildlife-related recreation statewide, a 41% increase from the baseline in FY 2018.



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In addition, CPW provides short-term access for hunters through several programs, including the Walk In Access (WIA) program, the Ranching for Wildlife (RFW) program and the Bighorn Sheep Access Program (BSAP). The WIA program is designed to open privately-owned land to public small and big game hunting by entering into annual public access agreements with landowners willing to allow public hunting on their land. Each year, CPW holds an enrollment period for landowners to offer their property into the WIA Program. In FY 2023, CPW enrolled nearly 242,700 acres in the WIA program, all of which are open for small game hunting, and 211,100 acres, which are also available for big game hunting.

Similarly, CPW’s Ranching for Wildlife Program provides Colorado residents a unique opportunity to hunt on private ranch land that is normally closed to the public. Participating ranches provide public hunting recreation access to their land free of charge to those who draw licenses. The number of licenses on each ranch is determined by negotiations between the landowner and CPW. In addition, participating landowners are required to improve habitat on their ranch for both game and non-game animals, helping preserve and enhance open

spaces for wildlife to live and thrive as well as keep the hunting heritage alive for future generations. As of FY 2023, 24 ranches are enrolled in the program, providing more than 988,300 acres of access to around 1,000 licensed public hunters. Moreover, RFW ranches facilitated 10 youth and novice adult programs, providing 30 new hunters opportunities. The numbers of licenses provided in FY 2023 are lower than in previous years due to the severe winter conditions in the northwest region of the state.

Finally, CPW’s Bighorn Sheep Access Program continues to offer unique public access for bighorn sheep hunting on private lands in the southeastern region of Colorado. This innovative program provides incentives for landowners with suitable habitat to establish and maintain bighorn sheep herds in alignment with CPW management goals. Nine ranches currently participate in the program, providing around 599,000 acres of access to bighorn sheep hunting in Colorado. Collaborations with ranches on research, population monitoring and information sharing remain a significant contribution to managing these wildlife resources. While the number of sheep licenses allocated for the public remains small, these licenses provide truly unique public access to private lands.

**TABLE 4**

**GOAL #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**

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Number of non-motorized trail grants awarded	FY18	21	16*	-24%*
Non-motorized trail grants funding	FY18	\$3,433,893	\$1,980,923*	-42%*
Land and Water Conservation Fund grants awarded	N/A*	N/A*	5*	N/A*
Land and Water Conservation Fund grants funding	N/A*	N/A*	\$4,576,260*	N/A*
Number of OHV trail grants awarded	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	53	60	13%
OHV trail grants funding	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$4,339,000	\$6,236,360	44%
Number of snowmobile trail grants awarded	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	44	32	-27%
Snowmobile trail grants funding	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$967,000	\$1,196,744	24%
Trail crew hours	FY20	112,500	148,484	32%
Total acres of hunting and fishing access statewide	FY18	1,190,000	1,675,100	41%
Increase in Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program acreage	FY19	4,410	28,700	551%
Total Public Access Program acreage	FY19	478,600	966,600	102%
Walk In Access Program - Small game access acres	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	177,621	242,679	37%
Walk In Access Program - Big game access acres	FY19	86,191	211,113	145%

\*Note: in FY 2022 CPW began tracking Land and Water Conservation Fund grants separately from other non-motorized trail grants.



# Goal 5: Increasing and Improving Big Game Populations

Colorado's big game herds require thoughtful and intensive management to accommodate the many and varied public demands and growing impacts from people. CPW is actively working to balance the ever-increasing human presence on the landscape with the conservation of Colorado's world-class natural resources.

## **Increasing and improving habitat for big game populations**

Colorado is home to some of the largest big game herds in North America, primarily because of the state's diverse landscape and varied habitat types. During FY 2023, CPW spent over \$55.5 million for conservation and improvement of big game habitat in Colorado, a 74% increase from the baseline amount spent for these purposes.

CPW monitors how investments in habitat affect big game, using Herd Management Plans (HMPs). HMPs integrate the plans and intentions of CPW with the concerns and ideas of land use management agencies and interested members of the public to establish long-term objectives for how each big game species and herd across the state should be managed. HMPs are created through a public process, using the best available scientific information on herd populations and habitat conditions. In preparing an HMP, CPW staff aim to balance the biological capabilities of the herd and its habitat with the public's demand for wildlife recreational opportunities. In FY 2023, staff rolled out a new approach of completing all of the HMP revisions for a given species in a given region at the same time. This was highly successful with 33 HMPs revised in FY 2023 alone, including all of the elk HMPs in the Southwest Region and all of the deer HMPs in the Northwest Region, and well exceeding the target of completing 16 HMPs each year.

CPW staff work hard to ensure big game populations stay within the population objective ranges specified in the HMPs and other regional and statewide management plans, with the goal of increasing the proportion of elk, deer and pronghorn antelope herds that fall within target management objective ranges by 5% each year. An assessment conducted in May 2023 shows that 18 (43%) of the state's elk herds are within their HMP population objective ranges, which is an increase of 10% from the previous year. Six (21%) of the state's pronghorn antelope herds are within their population objective ranges, which is a slight decrease of 1% from the previous year. And, 15 (28%) of the state's deer herds are currently within their population objective ranges, which is a decrease of 24% from the previous year. This decrease is largely because the HMPs for many deer herds were updated in the past six months, which changed their management objectives. It will take time to shift the population to fit within the new objective ranges.

CPW has a long history of studying and managing mule deer, dating back to the agency's origins. Together with the public and stakeholders, CPW works to stabilize, sustain, and increase mule deer populations in Colorado, resulting in greater hunting and wildlife-related recreation opportunities. CPW is conducting several ongoing studies to determine the role that predation, energy development, recreation, and development play in mule deer survival.

Using the West Slope Mule Deer Strategy (WSMDS), approved in 2014, to guide management decisions, over 8,800 acres of big game habitat improvements were completed in FY 2023. The projects cover a variety of enhancement techniques from native sagebrush community restoration to timber removal and prescribed burns. While this amount is less than the baseline year of FY 2019, it appears that was an artificially high year, as the number of acres improved have remained largely consistent over the past four years. Additionally, the costs to implement all types of habitat improvements have increased by roughly 20-40% since FY 2019. Staff continue to leverage their resources to improve as many acres as possible through partnerships with state, federal, and private partners. CPW also provided project planning and technical support, seed mixing logistics and seed storage through the Delta Seed Warehouse, and grant support for many partners throughout the Western Slope in priority WSMDS landscapes.

CPW's Habitat Partnership Program (HPP) also helps to improve habitat for big game populations. Local HPP committees and the State Council, made up of nearly 150 volunteers representing livestock growers, sportspersons, federal land management agencies and CPW staff met throughout the year to cooperatively discuss and, operating under CPW Commission approved plans, work towards reducing conflicts between big game and agricultural operators associated with forage and fences. In FY 2023, HPP was proud to contribute to reducing wildlife conflicts throughout the harsh winter in the northwest corner of Colorado. Early in the winter of 2023, it became apparent that conditions in Moffat, Rio Blanco, and Routt Counties would significantly impact wildlife and agricultural operators. HPP made significant funding available for a Parks and Wildlife Commission-approved baiting operation, replacement hay, and use of heavy equipment to clear snow from baiting locations and hay stacks. Ultimately in FY 2023, HPP contributed over \$395,000 towards this effort and improved nearly 33,500 acres of habitat. One challenge that HPP committees encountered in FY 2023 is the increasing cost of materials and contractors, forcing committee representatives to make difficult prioritization decisions.

Finally, the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP) offers private landowners the opportunity to voluntarily protect their property containing important wildlife habitat through establishing conservation easements. The program prioritizes grants for conservation easements that support big game winter range, wildlife crossings, and migration corridors, public access for hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing, and protecting habitat for species of concern. In FY 2023, CPW increased the total number of interests enrolled in the CWHP by more than 28,700 acres.

**Improving big game winter range and migration corridors**

The health of Colorado’s big game herds depends on intact and connected landscapes and habitats. For this reason, CPW is committed to protecting big game herds by maintaining habitat connectivity and working to remove migration barriers that may exist. Many big game species exhibit annual migrations along traditional routes and between seasonal ranges, and the conservation of these migration corridors and critical winter ranges is a significant priority. In alignment with Executive Order 2019-011 for the conservation of Colorado’s Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors, Terrestrial Section staff conducted movement analyses of five big game herds using GPS collar data to better understand the movement patterns of big game herds. Staff have also created summary reports displaying these big game movements.

The Habitat Conservation Unit has been working to develop its first Statewide Habitat Conservation and Connectivity Plan (SHCCP), which they hope to finalize by June 2024. In FY 2023, staff convened an internal workgroup to manage this planning process and help select priority wildlife species. They have also completed a stakeholder analysis to identify interested parties and the first stakeholder planning meeting took place on June 20, 2023. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program will help with the spatial analysis and writing of the SHCCP.

TABLE 5				
GOAL #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				
Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Amount spent on big game habitat and conservation	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$31,974,000	\$55,562,805	74%
Number of acres improved through Habitat Partnership Program projects	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	21,215	33,467	58%
Number of acres improved through Colorado West Slope Mule Deer Strategy	FY19	11,300	8,835	-22%



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

Colorado Parks and Wildlife operates 42 state parks, providing public access to almost 230,000 acres of park land statewide. Colorado’s state parks continue to draw high numbers of visitors – in FY 2023, over 17.9 million people visited our state parks, a 22% increase from the baseline amount. With many state parks experiencing record high attendance, it is important to maintain exceptional customer service to ensure a positive and memorable visitor experience. Unfortunately, unprecedented visitation has resulted in damage to natural resources, highlighting the need for education on the importance of recreating responsibly, continued investment from CPW in operations and maintenance, and where possible, expansion of the state park system to accommodate increasing public demand.

In the last five years, CPW has acquired several properties and is working to develop each new property, as outlined below, some of which has been funded with help from \$14 million from the General Fund allocated in 2021 (House Bill 21-1326). CPW is also adding space and facilities to its existing state parks. In FY 2023, 17 acres were added to the popular Highline Lake State Park, as a part of a project to add 20 campsites and a new day-use area.

## Planning Fishers Peak State Park

The 19,200-acre Fishers Peak property was purchased in February 2019 through a collaboration between the City of Trinidad, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, GOCO, and CPW. In April 2020, CPW acquired the land and began the process of developing Colorado’s next state park. Several significant milestones have been accomplished in the past three years, including opening 250 acres of the park to the public on October 30, 2020 and finalizing the Master Plan, which serves as an overarching guide for the operation of the park. In FY 2023 staff began developing a trail to the top of Fishers Peak, which is slated to be finished in the fall of 2023. Additionally, staff have been working with the Colorado Department of Transportation to secure the entrance road off of Interstate 25, which will facilitate the design and construction of the main entrance, visitor center footprint, campgrounds and other major trailheads by the end of 2023.

## Sweetwater Lake Project

On August 31, 2021 the Forest Service closed on the purchase of the 486-acre Sweetwater Lake area property. The Conservation Fund purchased the property from a group of private investors a year earlier to hold it for eventual Forest Service purchase. Local governments including counties and towns, commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and individuals came together to provide funding and support for this significant acquisition. A partnership was formed between Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Eagle Valley Land Trust, and USFS White River National Forest to create and implement a long-term plan improving public access to Sweetwater Lake, enhancing the recreation opportunities historically offered in the Sweetwater Lake area and protecting the social and natural characteristics of the area. The Sweetwater Partnership is now preparing for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the next step in long-term management planning for Sweetwater Lake.

## Colorado Clays State Recreation Area

Also in 2021, CPW closed on the purchase of the Colorado Clays Shooting Park in Adams County and began managing it as a state recreation area. Located just 30 minutes northeast of Denver and near Barr Lake State Park, Colorado Clays Shooting Park offers both recreational and competitive shooters a wide variety of clay target shooting, including sporting clays, skeet and trap, as well as both rifle and pistol shooting. In 2022, Colorado Clays operated under a successful concession agreement, which was extended into 2023. Work to develop a sustainable operating plan for Colorado Clays is ongoing and expected to be implemented in 2024.

## Investing in operations, maintenance and customer service

In 2021, the Colorado Legislature passed Senate Bill 21-11 allocating \$20 million to fund capital construction projects at existing state parks, enabling CPW to ramp up its investments in facilities throughout its state parks. Staff continued to work on these projects throughout FY 2023 with several of the projects nearing completion, including electrical upgrades at North Sterling and Jackson Lake state parks. In line with this commitment, during FY 2023, CPW devoted about \$15.1 million to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at Colorado’s state parks, up 160% from the baseline levels.

Additionally in FY 2023, to better accommodate customers and continue the agency’s culture of exceptional customer service, CPW implemented a timed entry reservation system, which is being piloted at Eldorado Canyon State Park during the summer months. The pilot program had great initial success in reducing crowding at the entrance and parking areas, and the pilot test will continue into 2024. Staff are also exploring camera systems and other technologies as possible methods of reporting when parking lots reach capacity. Additionally, through a partnership with Rivian, LLC, CPW is installing a series of public electric vehicle chargers throughout the state park system. Twenty electric vehicle charging ports were installed at state parks across the Front Range in FY 2023, and more are planned for installation in FY 2024.

TABLE 6				
GOAL #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				
Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Amount spent on operations and maintenance at state parks	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$5,800,000	\$15,081,70	160%
Annual state park visitation	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	14,646,128	17,930,033	22%
Acres of accessible state park land	FY18	221,139	229,295	4%





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

CPW owns over 115 dams throughout the state, the largest inventory of dams of any owner in Colorado. Of these, 90 dams are jurisdictional, meaning the size of the dam is large enough to threaten human life and cause property damage downstream if the dam were to fail. As such, maintenance and rehabilitation of CPW’s dams is of paramount importance. CPW’s full-time Dam Safety Engineers, with the help of other dedicated staff around the state, manage all of the work and monitoring on CPW’s dams. They perform regular dam safety inspections on all CPW-owned dams and maintain up-to-date Emergency Action Plans for First Responders. CPW is making dam rehabilitation a priority by allocating capital construction funds to dam improvement projects ahead of any other capital construction projects. Prioritizing the financial needs of CPW’s dams has allowed for significant improvements to be made in dam operating conditions over the last few years.

## Rehabilitating High Risk Dams

Water impounded by CPW’s dams is used for downstream irrigation, fish hatchery operations, and water-based recreational activities. CPW’s reservoirs are some of the most popular places to visit in the state. However, public infrastructure and population centers are often located downstream, which increases the likelihood of devastating consequences in the event of a dam failure.

In 2014, CPW conducted a Screening Level Risk Analysis (SLRA) investigating the risk profiles of its dams to inform the prioritization of future repairs and maintenance. The SLRA and subsequent research found 22 of CPW’s dams to be in a “high hazard” condition, with a loss of human life expected in the event of a dam failure. Another 15 dams were considered “significant hazards,” with major property damage expected in the event of a failure. Of these 15 dams, three are Parks-owned dams and 12 are Wildlife-owned dams. The average age of the 37 highest risk dams is 75 years old, including six dams that were constructed over 100 years ago.

Based largely on the potential for loss of human life downstream and risks to environmental, economic, and recreational resources in the event of a dam failure, the SLRA evaluated the risk of CPW’s high- and significant-hazard dams, further identifying 11 dams in CPW’s portfolio that posed the greatest risks. Since the 2014 release of the SLRA’s findings, four additional dams were added to that list when their routine safety inspections revealed conditions that exceeded an acceptable level of risk. In July 2021, funding became available to hire a consulting firm to update the dam SLRA for all high and significant hazard dams, and work by the consultant was ongoing in FY 2023.

Since FY 2016, CPW has committed almost \$53.4 million to rehabilitate high risk dams. The total dam maintenance and repair estimate for all CPW dams is about \$120.7 million. As of FY 2023, six of the greatest risk dams have been repaired, two more have full repairs under construction, one has secured funding for construction, and the five remaining priority dams have full repairs planned in the next 5+ years.

## Reducing dam maintenance and repair backlog

As dams age and their structures deteriorate, more involved activities are needed to return them to compliance with safety regulations. Since FY 2016, CPW has allocated almost \$10.3 million for routine dam maintenance and just under \$2.2 million for other dam improvements. The availability of maintenance funding allows CPW to proactively care for these assets in an effort to reduce the need for large-scale, costly rehabilitation that can result from prolonged deferred maintenance.

During FY 2023, the Dam Safety Unit spent a good deal of time preparing for the next round of major construction on many projects. Many maintenance projects were completed, as well as repairing the outlet and gate on the Rio Blanco Dam. Repair and rehabilitation construction was started at the Alberta Park and Rio Hondo dams, which is expected to be completed in 2024. Additionally, several engineering studies were started or completed for dam repair and rehabilitation, including: Tarryall Dam, Elk Falls Dam (Staunton State Park), Meadow Creek Dam, and Garnet Mesa Dam (Sweitzer State Park). Additional remote monitoring was also successfully installed at high- and significant-hazard dams. The next large construction project on the horizon is the complete repair of the Tarryall Dam.

**TABLE 7**

**GOAL #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 the division s 110 dams**

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Amount awarded for dam maintenance for high risk dams (cumulative)	Sum of FY16, FY17, FY18, FY19	\$29,534,172	\$53,383,172	181%
Amount awarded for dam maintenance (cumulative)	Sum of FY16, FY17, FY18, FY19	\$4,326,007	\$10,297,007	238%
Amount awarded for other dam improvements (cumulative)	Sum of FY16, FY17, FY18, FY19	\$749,568	\$2,169,568	289%



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

CPW operates 19 hatcheries that are dedicated to improving Colorado’s fish populations and serve a critical role in the recovery of native fish species. Since 1881, CPW has been the lead agency responsible for fisheries management of public waters in Colorado. CPW’s hatcheries support and enhance angling opportunities through the breeding, hatching, rearing, and stocking of fish in lakes and streams across the state. CPW’s hatcheries also provide public educational opportunities through hatchery tours and informational materials.

## Increasing fish production

FY 2023 was a productive year at CPW’s hatcheries with over 104 million fish stocked, including catchable trout, sub-catchable trout, non-game species, and warm water species. This level of fish production is about 13% more than the baseline total number of fish stocked. Overall, in FY 2023, CPW stocked nearly 3.2 million catchable trout, nearly 13.2 million sub-catchable trout, 176,000 non-game species, and almost 87.5 million warm water species. Declines in the numbers of sub-catchable trout and nongame species stocked in FY 2023 in comparison to the baseline levels are largely due to year-to-year variabilities in wild fish spawning.

## Modernizing and renovating the hatchery system

The need for modernization and repair to CPW’s aging hatchery system is essential to its continued operation for the next 100+ years. In 2019, CPW began a multi-phase process to modernize the hatchery system. The Hatchery Section began work on Phase III of the Hatchery Modernization Plan in 2022. Phase III provides a comprehensive design for modernizing Mt. Shavano Fish Hatchery. After severing ties with the initial design consultant due to insufficient deliverables, CPW is finalizing a contract with a new design consultant. The design will be completed by summer 2024.

CPW continues to increase investments in its existing hatcheries. In FY 2023, almost \$25.5 million was awarded for hatchery maintenance, renovation and modernization. This represents an over 2,000% increase in funding compared to the baseline. In line with needed improvements to CPW’s hatchery facilities, the Hatchery Section completed a large capital project to replace old, brittle plumbing and valves in the Pitkin Hatchery building, which will ensure a more reliable water supply to fish and eggs in the building.

Work has also continued on the installation of new supply wells at the Bellvue-Watson, Mt. Ouray, and Native Species Restoration hatcheries to improve and secure water supplies for these facilities. Additionally, the Hatchery Section recently replaced failing drain valves at the Durango Hatchery and refurbished a supply well at the Roaring Judy Hatchery.



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**TABLE 8**

**GOAL #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**

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Number of catchable trout stocked	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	2,881,000	3,177,229	10%
Number of sub-catchable trout stocked	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	18,563,000	13,163,943	-29%
Number of non-game species stocked	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	284,000	176,277	-38%
Number of warm water species stocked	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	70,514,000	87,493,205	24%
Total number of fish stocked	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	92,241,000	104,010,654	13%
Amount awarded for hatchery modernization/ renovation/ maintenance	FY18	\$1,216,225	\$26,450,000	2,075%

# Goal 9: Reduce Large Capital Construction Backlog

Colorado Parks and Wildlife manages more than 1,400 facilities across Colorado, including buildings, shooting ranges, dams, roads, trails and other constructed facilities that provide opportunities for recreation, cultural education and enrichment, and research. Similar to other physical assets, CPW’s facilities and infrastructure need continuous maintenance and repair, and replacement after a certain point.

## Reduce capital construction and maintenance backlog

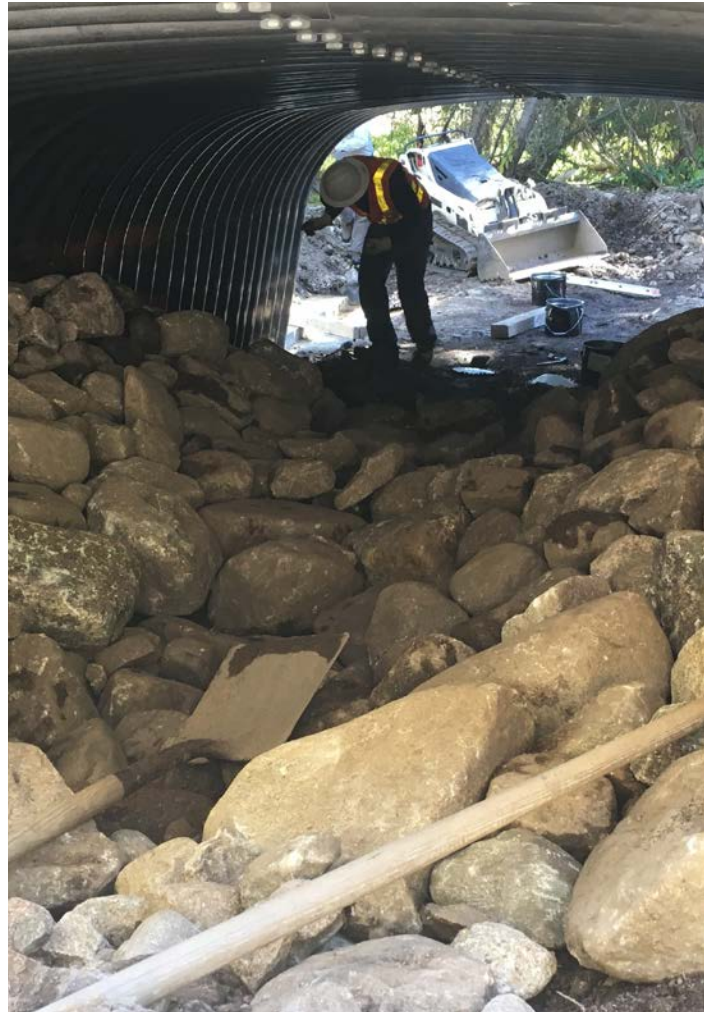
CPW continues to make significant investments in capital construction, allocating nearly \$44 million to large capital construction and more than \$10.3 million to small capital construction projects for parks and wildlife in FY 2023. An increase to both the parks and wildlife small capital program budgets over the years allows the regions to address currently identified maintenance needs, as well as emergency repairs on CPW facilities as they arrive. This has allowed the regions to adapt to ever changing maintenance needs, allowing facility maintenance to take place before larger and more costly repairs became necessary.

In total, 66 small capital projects were funded in FY 2023 for maintenance and replacement work, and 10 large capital projects were approved for maintenance and repair work around the state. Projects under construction in FY 2023 include:

- ▶ Construction of Craig Warehouse Office and Shop – This project removed and replaced the old shop/office space, which was originally built in 1960. The original facility was beyond repair and had several health and safety issues. The new facility has been upgraded to meet current codes, and the parking/storage yard was paved to reduce maintenance and provide a better location to store equipment and materials.
- ▶ Pueblo State Wildlife Area (SWA) Road Improvements – The existing roads had become difficult and unsafe to drive on during wet conditions. This project re-graded 8 miles of access roads and added additional road base throughout the SWA for public access.
- ▶ Las Animas State Fish Unit Pond Liner Replacement – The pond liners at 5 of the ponds at the Las Animas Hatchery had degraded and were no longer able to prevent water loss in the rearing ponds. This project replaced the liners, which allows the hatchery to continue to produce fish to be stocked throughout the state.

In addition, funding from the General Assembly in 2021 added \$20 million of General Fund dollars (Senate Bill 21-112) to support parks infrastructure projects and provide facility and public access improvements at 12 parks statewide by expanding or enhancing facilities that are seeing a great deal of public use. Staff continued to work on these projects throughout FY 2023 with several of the projects nearing completion, including electrical upgrades at North Sterling and Jackson Lake state parks, as well as the expansion of Highline Lake State Park to add about 20 campsites and a new day-use area (with funding from House Bill 21-1326).

<sup>2</sup>This includes money allocated to hatchery modernization as mentioned in Goal 8 and internal shooting ranges as mentioned in Goal 1.



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TABLE 9				
GOAL #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				
Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Amount allocated to small capital construction	FY18	\$3,412,118	\$10,308,18	202%
Amount allocated to large capital construction	FY18	\$10,333,380	\$43,981,711	326%



# Goal 10: Reduce the Need to List Additional Species

Conservation of threatened and endangered species and habitat is an area of significant focus for CPW. Conservation involves careful land use decisions, concentrated research, and cooperative partnerships. By balancing species-specific needs with policy requirements and broad reaching habitat-based projects, CPW uses many tools to effectively manage Colorado's wildlife and crucial habitat.

## Investing in non-game species conservation

In FY 2023, CPW spent almost \$12.2 million on the conservation of non-game species and habitat through research, population status monitoring and reintroduction, and habitat protection and restoration benefiting threatened and endangered species. This is a 36% increase from baseline levels. A sample of the activities in FY 2023 includes:

- ▶ Broad-scale monitoring programs for multiple bird and bat species
- ▶ Annual lek counts for greater sage-grouse, Gunnison sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, lesser prairie-chicken, and greater prairie-chicken
- ▶ A statewide population occupancy study for lynx
- ▶ Annual surveys for black-footed ferrets at release sites and the implementation of a research study to evaluate the use of scent dogs for survey efforts
- ▶ Continued species-specific studies to determine the population status of western yellow-billed cuckoo, black swift, pinyon jay, white-tailed ptarmigan, Gunnison prairie dog, white-tailed prairie dog, burrowing owl, and mountain plover
- ▶ Sampling to track distribution and status of all native fish species on the eastern plains, including 48 sites representing 21 streams in the South Platte and Arkansas river basins
- ▶ Monitoring 81 boreal toad breeding sites
- ▶ Extensive survey work to characterize northern leopard frog distribution and abundance
- ▶ Sampling five waters containing greenback cutthroat trout, 31 waters with conservation populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout, and 17 waters with conservation populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout to determine population status, estimate population size, and/or assess reintroduction success
- ▶ Monitoring populations of West Slope warmwater fish in 10 waters.

## Investing in wetlands conservation

Wetlands are lands affected by water that support unique plants and soils, making up just 2% of Colorado's landscape, but providing benefits to over 75% of the state's wildlife species. The protection, restoration, and enhancement of wetlands and riparian areas is vital to the conservation of wildlife diversity in the state. Wetland and riparian landscapes provide crucial feeding, resting and rearing habitat, and movement corridors. They also improve water quality and quantity, and create open space, educational opportunities, and economic benefits from hunting, fishing and bird watching.

CPW's Wetlands Program annually awards competitive grants to CPW staff and partners for projects that restore wetlands and riparian areas. These projects create new managed wetlands,

improve the function and management efficiency of existing managed wetlands, remove non-native invasive vegetation and replace with native vegetation, manage invasive cattail growth in wetlands, restore riparian habitat impacted by mining, and reconnect incised creeks with their floodplains. Projects are conducted on state wildlife areas, state parks, and other public and private lands. The program drives funding priorities to those projects benefiting species of greatest conservation need identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan.

In FY 2023, CPW awarded \$1,250,000 to 19 funding partners improving 14,084 acres of wetlands or riparian areas and benefiting eight priority waterfowl species and 10 Tier 1 species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). One long-term project targeted the prairie pothole region of south central Canada, which hosts a productive wetland/grassland complex where a large proportion of the continental duck population breeds. Conservation of wetlands and associated upland nesting cover in this region is crucial to sustaining populations of North American waterfowl that migrate and winter in the Central and Pacific Flyways, including Colorado.

Under the Fall Flights program authorized by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), state agencies contribute funding towards wetland and grassland conservation in this landscape. Forty-three states currently contribute to this program. State contributions are matched 1:1 by Ducks Unlimited, then matched again by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (federal funds administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), resulting in \$4 of conservation for every \$1 invested by state agencies. The Future Generations Act authorized a fee increase for the Colorado Waterfowl Stamp that allowed CPW to step up its investments in this critical initiative.



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### Partnering in pursuit of mutual goals

Collaboration with partners, including federal and state agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations, is essential to conserving Colorado’s SGCN. In FY 2023, CPW’s Conservation Coordinators worked along with partners to manage nongame species and habitat through research, population status monitoring, reintroduction, habitat protection, and habitat restoration, achieving CPW’s goal to participate in collaborative planning and partnership processes for at least 10 terrestrial SGCN. A sample of the work performed in FY 2023 includes:

- ▶ Developing the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan in collaboration with stakeholders
- ▶ Participating in the ongoing development of the Gunnison Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment process
- ▶ Initiating preliminary discussions for the development of the 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan revision
- ▶ Participating in Colorado Statewide Habitat and Connectivity Plan discussions
- ▶ Participating in collaborative initiatives for white-nose syndrome monitoring and black-footed ferret reintroduction and management
- ▶ Continuing ongoing discussions and planning in collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) related to the National Listing Workplan
- ▶ Participating in the Central Grasslands Roadmap planning efforts.

Privately held land and water resources provide important habitat to many wildlife species in Colorado. CPW has a long history of partnering with private landowners across the state to manage and perpetuate wildlife populations and conserve and improve habitat. Many of CPW’s private land efforts seek to couple habitat conservation with public access to wildlife resources. Private landowners have played key roles in the conservation of rare species, such as black-footed ferrets, and, without their support, Colorado’s remarkable wildlife abundance and rich hunting and fishing opportunities would not exist.



**TABLE 10**

**GOAL #10. Reducing the need to list additional state trust species under the federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 by partnering with private landowners to improve species distribution and abundance monitoring and disease prevention efforts**

Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Amount spent on nongame species conservation	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$8,933,515	\$12,181,292	36%
Total amount of grants for Wetlands Program	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	\$978,139	\$1,250,000	28%





# Impact on License Sales

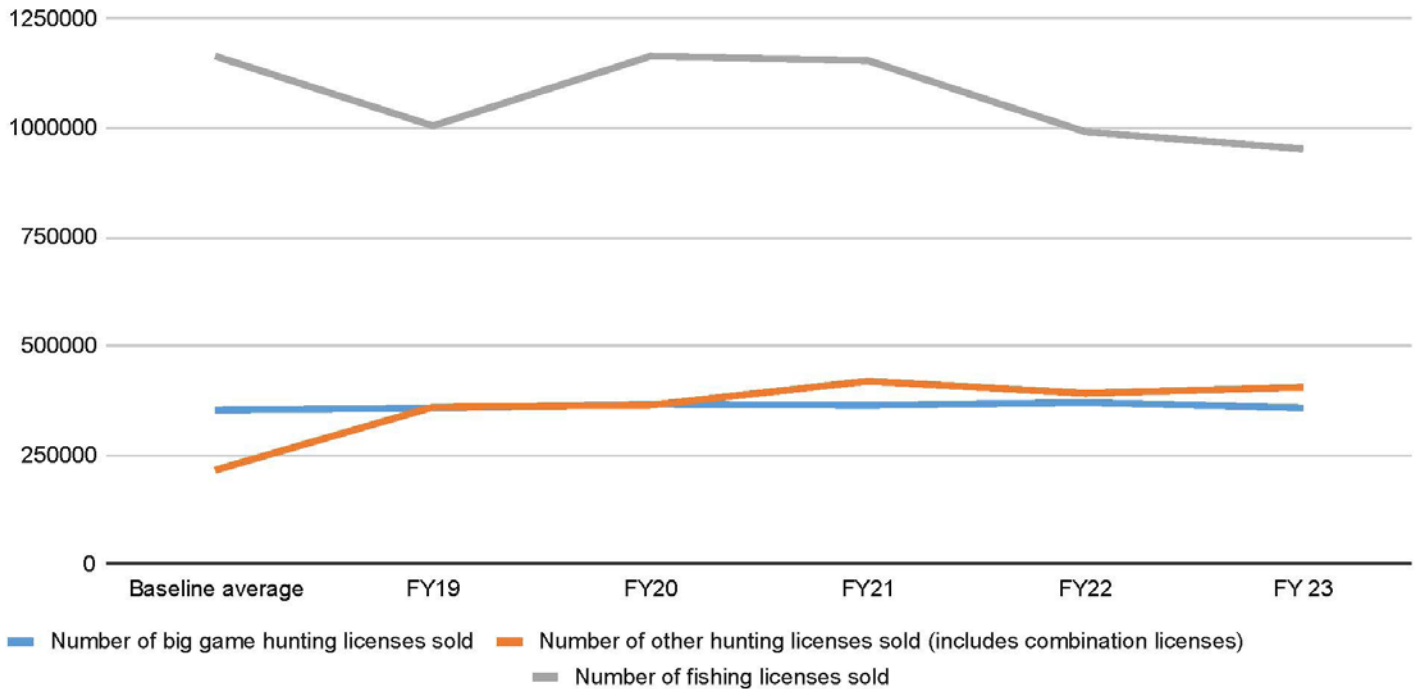
During FY 2023, CPW sold over 358,800 big game hunting licenses, a 1% increase from the baseline average. Additionally in FY 2023, CPW sold over 405,600 other licenses including combination hunting/fishing licenses. This is a 88% increase from the baseline average, which is likely attributable to the introduction of the qualifying license requirement implemented in 2019.

This change requires all applicants to 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, resident annual combination small game/fishing, resident senior combination small game/fishing, and resident Veteran’s lifetime combination small game/fishing licenses.

Finally, in FY 2023, CPW sold almost 952,200 fishing licenses, a 18% decrease from the baseline average.

TABLE 11				
Impact on license sales				
Metric	Baseline Year	Baseline Data	FY 2023	FY 2023 % Change (from baseline)
Number of big game hunting licenses sold	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	353,811	358,831	1%
Number of other hunting licenses sold (includes combination licenses)	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	216,029	405,617	88%
Number of fishing licenses sold	3-year average of FY16, FY17, FY18	1,164,239	952,194	-18%

Figure 4: Trends in License Sales





# 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 PWC 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)).

The Act 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.

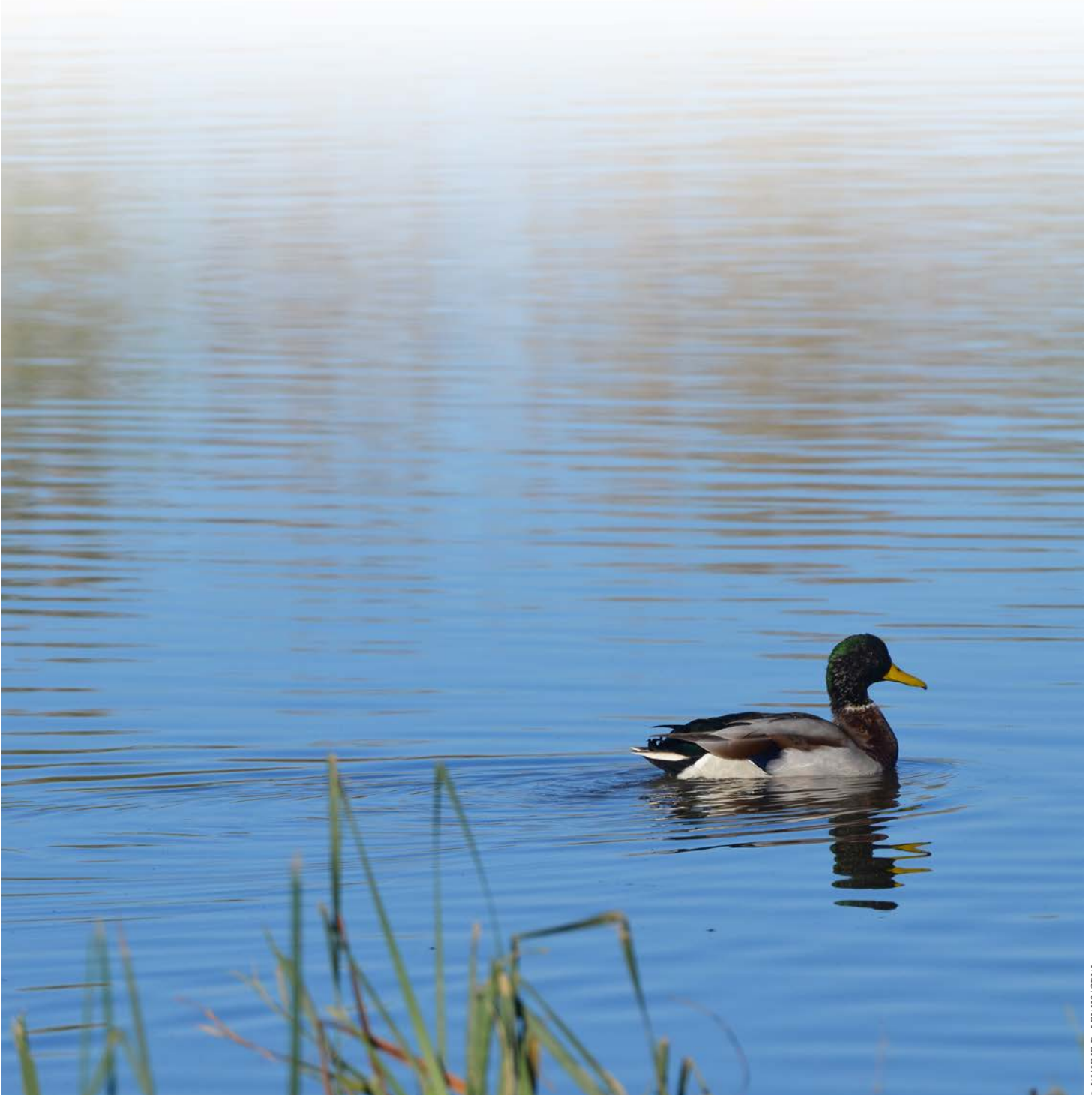
(2) THIS SECTION IS REPEALED, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2025." (33-4-121(1)(a)(I), C.R.S.)

# 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.

For Colorado Waterfowl Stamp funds specifically, \$400,000 was available for the FY 2023 grant cycle. These grant funds support three projects that will impact 11,103 acres of wetlands habitat. Ducks Unlimited was the Waterfowl Stamp grant partner in FY 2023.



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