



2019 Annual Report on the Administration of Colorado Parks and Wildlife
January 2020

To:
House Rural Affairs and Agriculture Committee
Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee

I. Statutory Requirements

On June 6, 2011, Governor Hickenlooper signed Senate Bill 11-208 into law, merging the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Division of Wildlife into the Division of Parks and Wildlife, referred to herein as Colorado Parks and Wildlife or CPW. On June 4, 2012, House Bill 12-1317 was signed into law to finalize the merger of the Divisions and to create the Parks and Wildlife Commission. Among the requirements of HB 12-1317 is the delivery to the Legislature of an annual report, more fully described below:

C.R.S. 33-9-106 (2)

"Beginning in 2013 AND NOTWITHSTANDING SECTION 24-1-136 (11), C.R.S., the executive director shall report annually to the joint house agriculture, livestock, and natural resources committee and the senate agriculture, natural resources, and energy committee, or any successor committees, regarding the administration of the division, including an evaluation of division resources and their utilization and an identification of opportunities for efficiencies. Each such report must summarize stakeholder outreach conducted during the prior year and must also identify disposition of assets and cost savings, both planned and realized, since the previous year, including savings pertaining to personnel, equipment, services, and provisioning."

II. Division Resource Utilization

Utilization of division resources is reported to the Parks and Wildlife Commission. The most recent report on sources and uses of funds is available on the Commission's [website](#).

III. Stakeholder Outreach

CPW is committed to engaging Coloradans and visitors to inform park, wildlife and outdoor recreation management. In 2019, CPW conducted a variety of stakeholder outreach including, but not limited to:

- A. **Big Game Season Structure (BGSS)**. CPW uses a five-year [Big Game Season Structure \(BGSS\)](#) as a framework for big game hunting regulations. The 2020-2024 BGSS kicked off in May 2018 and wrapped up in November 2019.

Input on the 2020-2024 BGSS was collected from the public in several different ways. The primary way was through an online public comment form that was available on the CPW webpage from late December 2018 through early February 2019. A hard copy of the comment form was also available at CPW offices, online as well as at BGSS public meetings. CPW held fifteen BGSS public meetings throughout the state during the public comment period. Additionally, there were two telephone town



halls (one for residents and one for nonresidents) and two focus group meetings (one on the eastern slope and one on the western slope) where CPW staff engaged with sportsmen and women about season structure topics. Through these means the agency interacted with 458 in-person public meeting attendees, 6,800 social media public meeting viewers, 4,749 people over teleconference, received public comment feedback from over 3,000 respondents, and spoke intimately with 18 focus group participants. For more information, see the [2020-2024 BGSS Summary of Public Involvement](#). As requested by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, CPW staff sought additional public input on [plains deer rifle seasons](#).

- B. Park Management Plans.** For each park management plan, CPW solicits input from the public prior to drafting the plan as well as on the draft plan itself, most often received via online surveys/comment forms. The plans are also presented at Parks & Wildlife Commission meetings. In 2019, CPW completed management plans for Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, Sylvan Lake State Park and State Forest State Park (SFSP) and began work on plans for Lathrop State Park and Eldorado Canyon State Park.

Eldorado Canyon State Park is experiencing increasing visitation and reaches maximum vehicle capacity much of the year, especially during summer weekends and holidays. Illegal parking on the surrounding roads and traffic congestion are degrading visitor arrival experiences and impeding traffic flow for emergency services and nearby residents. The management plan for Eldorado Canyon will include a 'visitor use management' section. To gather input on this vital part of the park's plan, CPW convened a Task Force of relevant user groups, residents, land management and emergency services agencies. The Task Force spent the summer of 2019 providing guidance to CPW on developing management strategies for the park. These strategies were shared with public via open houses and an online survey. The responses to these efforts as well as intercept surveys at the park, a traffic study and natural and cultural resource data will be used to draft the management plan in 2020.

- C. Future State Parks Criteria.** In keeping with the Future Generations Act (SB 18-143) which calls for CPW to identify and begin planning the development of a new Colorado state park, CPW wrote Future State Parks Criteria to use in evaluating properties for consideration as a state park. To ensure the criteria reflect the interests and priorities of Coloradans, CPW incorporated feedback from the Parks and Wildlife Commission Forum "Colorado's Future State Parks," a Partners in the Outdoors Conference work session and an online comment form. The draft Future State Parks Criteria were available for public review with the online public comment form for just over three weeks in July and August 2019. CPW promoted the public comment opportunity through social, print and TV media, partners, CPW email contact lists and on CPW's website. CPW received about one thousand online comment forms.
- D. Visitor Satisfaction Survey.** In spring 2019, CPW began a pilot project to assess the recreation preferences, interests, and satisfaction of visitors to Colorado state parks. The pilot included eight parks where on-site surveys were conducted or



standard mail surveys were distributed to park visitors. Based on the pilot results, CPW will determine the methodology to use for surveying visitors at the remaining parks in the park system. The pilot year concludes in April 2020. The information collected will help CPW develop programs, communication efforts, and recreation opportunities that resonate with current (and prospective) state park users and they will help park staff remain responsive to potential changes in recreation preferences and trends. Additionally, these data will be used in a separate project to measure the economic contribution of individual state parks and the state park system as a whole.

- E. **Partners in the Outdoors.** The Partners in the Outdoors Conference is Colorado's foremost opportunity to cultivate common ground, explore best practices of partnering and design collaborative solutions with diverse voices and stakeholders to conserve Colorado's outdoor heritage. This annual conference planned and hosted by CPW has quickly become one of the signature events in Colorado bringing together organizations, agencies, schools, businesses and communities engaged in the future of Colorado's conservation and outdoor recreational opportunities. The conference provides a forum for networking and collaboration, partner recognition, professional development and grant funding.

During the 2019 conference, conference attendees worked to shift from planning to action with a focus on implementation of Colorado's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP). At the conference, attendees explored the following guiding questions: How do we continue to collaborate, shifting from successful planning to on-the-ground implementation? And how might we turn this plan into action that will positively impact Colorado's future?

The conference continued to grow represented by an increase in attendance of 10%, with nearly 600 participants representing over 250 organizations. The Partners in the Outdoors Grant program also grew by 33% with \$60,000 in grants given out to 13 different partner organizations.

- F. **Colorado Outdoor Partnership.** The Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP) formed in 2017 to advance a conversation on how to address growing pressures on outdoor resources. Representing leaders from diverse interests related to Colorado's outdoors, the CO-OP is united by its shared vision: In 2050, Colorado's people and economy thrive because of our healthy lands, water, wildlife, working farms and ranches, and improved hunting, angling and outdoor recreation opportunities for all. The CO-OP offers a valuable and efficient means for CPW to engage with diverse outdoor interests. While CPW serves as the coordinating entity of the partnership, the CO-OP members drive and approve the decisions, resolutions, and strategies.

In 2019, the CO-OP adopted The Pathway, a strategic and adaptive plan that identifies goals and guidelines that reflect the Colorado Outdoor Principles, existing planning documents and the consensus of the partnership's diverse membership. CPW and DNR are working with the CO-OP to explore a new statewide initiative to coordinate and support community-based coalitions dedicated to sustainable outdoor recreation and conservation of natural resources.

- G. **Social Media.** CPW has the second largest following on social media among similar



state park and wildlife agencies in the country. For 2019, CPW focused on increasing content highlighting behind-the-scenes work, conservation success stories and informative education about the state's wildlife and wild places. Overall, the agency's followers on social media grew by 19%. Instagram had the largest increase in reach - a 51% increase from the previous year. The number of impressions, the times CPW posts were viewed, totaled over 37 million. Additionally, the agency launched its new tagline, "Live Life Outside," which had a supporting social media strategy. Since launching in the spring of 2019, there have been over 1,800 photos posted to Instagram with the hashtag #livelifeoutsideCO. CPW highlighted, and continues to highlight, profiles sharing stories from the outdoors to position CPW as the leader in the Colorado outdoor and conservation space, as well as promoting opportunities and inclusion among all outdoor communities. The agency continues to look for new and innovative ways to utilize social media and build a community centered around recreation and conservation.

- H. **Other Planning and Management.** In 2019, CPW continued to collaborate with stakeholders through informal roundtables, including the Sportsperson's Roundtable and the Wildlife and Habitat Roundtable, to share information and discuss issues related to outdoor recreation and wildlife management.