

C O L O R A D O P A R K S & W I L D L I F E

Great Outdoors Colorado

FY 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Cover Photo: Red Cloud Peak Natural Area ©CPW

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Letter from the Director

I am excited to share the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Annual Report for the 2023-24 fiscal year with the Board of the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund. The work described in this report continues the mission we've served for more than 125 years. The agency's dedicated staff have used their time, talents, and energy to perpetuate the wildlife resources of Colorado, provide a quality state parks system, and provide enjoyable and sustainable out-door recreation opportunities that inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of our natural resources.

GOCO funding is vital to the realization of CPW's mission and contributes to nearly every aspect of CPW's work, including managing state parks, statewide initiatives in species conservation, maintaining and developing trails and infrastructure projects, and providing educational opportunities for youth and families. GOCO funding helps CPW protect and maintain Colorado's beautiful landscapes for recreation, outdoor education, hunting, angling, and species conservation.

In this report, you will see specific examples of the way GOCO benefits Colorado, including:

- › Operating support for Colorado state parks, supporting over 18.5 million visitor days; state park infrastructure and capital improvements at 11 state parks supporting 16 projects;
- › Expansion of CPW's resource stewardship team to further expand our abilities with data collection and management support of resources;
- › Completion of 15 wetland conservation projects that restored 4,700 acres of wetland and riparian habitat;
- › Support of the volunteer program that included 4,816 volunteers who donated 275,318 hours;
- › Trail maintenance and reconstruction of 121 miles, new trail construction of 19 miles, and additional 4 miles of trail planning;
- › Funding for 31 weeks of Colorado Youth Corps work weeks at 15 state parks; acquisition of nearly 2,000 acres for a new State Wildlife Area that preserves a vital elk migration corridor and miles of excellent fishing habitat; and
- › Continued support of the 20 Regional Partnerships across the state.

In hopes of serving all Coloradans, we will continue improving operations and strengthening partnerships. Recruiting and retaining qualified employees to manage wildlife, park, recreational, and aquatic resources is a top priority. We are excited to continue our work on the Colorado Outdoors Strategy to galvanize stakeholder voices and help shape the future of recreation in our state. We are identifying and beginning to plan the development of new Colorado state park areas and investing in other initiatives to increase park visitation, maintain excellent customer service, and ensure financial sustainability. Across the breadth of the agency, our efforts are to ensure that the Colorado we all enjoy today will remain available and enjoyable for future generations.

We thank you for trusting Colorado Parks and Wildlife and are proud to present the 2024 Annual Report.

Warm regards,



Jeff Davis

Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Working Together for Colorado

Colorado is recognized across the country and around the world for its beautiful landscapes and diverse and healthy wildlife populations. Access to outdoor recreation and the state's wildlife is a cornerstone of the Colorado lifestyle and quality of life. Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) is a major funding partner in Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) efforts. GOCO funding supports a wide variety of volunteer, youth, and education programs, as well as park operating and management activities. GOCO investments also support statewide initiatives in species conservation efforts, habitat protection and enhancement, maintenance and development of trails, and infrastructure projects.

GOCO grant programs are rooted in the core values of its strategic plan: Resource Conservation, Outdoor Stewardship, Community Vitality, Equitable Access, and Youth Connections. GOCO's mission is to help preserve, protect, enhance, and manage the state's wildlife, park, river, trail, and open space heritage. CPW's mission is complementary: to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. There is significant overlap between the missions of CPW and GOCO. This annual report highlights the great things CPW has accomplished in the state fiscal year 2023-24 with GOCO's help.

CPW receives minimal general tax support, and GOCO funding is vital to the ongoing mission of CPW, making many of these accomplishments possible. At the end of this report, you will find financial tables detailing GOCO's support for CPW in FY 2023-24, organized by Constitutional purpose and grant. CPW leveraged GOCO funding to conserve natural resources, promote outdoor stewardship, enhance community vitality, improve equitable access to the outdoors, and connect youth and families with nature.

\$16,131,965

INVESTMENT PLAN TOTAL
AWARD FOR OUTDOOR
RECREATION
FY 2023-24

\$10,012,272

INVESTMENT PLAN TOTAL AWARD
FOR WILDLIFE
FY 2023-24

Resource Conservation & Outdoor Stewardship

Protecting Colorado's most valuable natural resources.

Protection of Colorado's resources is the shared mission of GOCO and CPW. GOCO funding helps CPW protect new habitat and landscapes, and maintain areas that are already under CPW's care.





LAND AND WATER PROTECTION

In addition to managing Colorado's wildlife and state park system, CPW is responsible for acquiring, protecting, and managing lands, water resources, and water rights in coordination with private landowners and local, state, federal, and non-governmental partners.

Colorado's 66 million acres of land includes 31.8 million acres of agricultural lands, which sustain more than 39,000 ranches and farms. Without private landowner support, the conservation of Colorado's abundant wildlife habitat and access to world-class recreation opportunities would be severely limited. GOCO funding helps CPW leverage opportunities to protect these resources in perpetuity.

COLLARD RANCH STATE WILDLIFE AREA

1,860 ACRES

This acquisition preserves an important elk migration corridor and miles of excellent fishing habitat along Taryall Creek, increasing hunting and fishing opportunities for Coloradans. The final fee title purchase, funded with habitat stamp and GOCO funds, was completed in March 2024 with Western Rivers Conservancy officially transferring the ownership to CPW. Collard Ranch State Wildlife Area opened to hunting in fall 2024 and will open to fishing access in spring 2025 after infrastructure updates are made to the property.

2,305

FEE TITLE ACRES ACQUIRED

FY 2023-24

\$6,855,750

GOCO REIMBURSEMENTS FOR LAND ACQUISITION

FY 2023-24

¹https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=COLORADO

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Colorado’s system of state parks is more than 65 years old and requires continuous maintenance, restoration, and renovation to the standards expected by today’s visitors. In addition, the infrastructure on many of the wildlife areas, including dams and hatcheries, is much older.

The CPW Capital Development program manages the construction and maintenance of more than 1,400 structures and 115 dams across the state. GOCO funding is one of the primary funding sources for many capital projects at state parks.

▼ Fishers Peak Tribal Consultation ©CPW

PARKS LARGE CAPITAL

FISHERS PEAK STATE PARK- INITIAL PARK DEVELOPMENT AND STEWARDSHIP INVENTORY

\$2,000,000

Fishers Peak State Park is one of the newest properties in the system. It is located just outside the city of Trinidad and is characterized by its rugged terrain, expansive geographical area, and the iconic peak itself. Through this project, staff and consultants explored the park and conducted an inventory of its cultural, vegetative, and wildlife resources. CPW also hired consulting firms to begin mapping and designing the park’s infrastructure. This information will help guide the placement of infrastructure and shape the park’s future appearance. Currently, about 13 miles of trails are open to the public, and CPW is working to enhance access and amenities in the park. Additionally, the Fishers Peak staff are making efforts to incorporate the voices of Indigenous peoples in the design and amenities. With available funding, staff organized a series of consultations with Native American tribes, including those from Oklahoma, who have utilized this land for generations.



CRAWFORD STATE PARK-VOLUNTEER AND EMPLOYEE CAMPSITES

\$358,000

Through this project, CPW added new campsites for seasonal employees and volunteers with water, sewer, and electricity in the maintenance shop area at Crawford State Park to help with recruitment and retention during the busy season at the park. Located near the Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Crawford State Park's major draws are its reservoir and camping facilities. Visitors can enjoy fishing, water skiing, swimming, and even scuba diving. Due to the park's remote location, affordable housing for temporary staff and volunteers is limited. Having the option to place a camper near the property for the duration of their service can help recruit potential staff and volunteers, as there was not previously sufficient space for staff and volunteers in the popular public campgrounds.



Crawford Employee and Volunteer Campsites ©CPW

HIGHLINE LAKE STATE PARK-SWIM BEACH RESTROOM

\$1,165,000

This project replaced an aging swim beach restroom building, which was not large enough to serve visitors and needed numerous repairs. The new, larger building can be properly maintained to meet the needs of the popular park. Highline Lake State Park has two lakes and a popular trail system for the people living in and visiting the Grand Valley. In another project, CPW is also expanding the park to include more campsites and improve access to the water.



Highline Beach Restroom ©CPW

MUELLER STATE PARK-CAMP-GROUND RENOVATIONS

\$655,700

This project renovated a portion of the park's campsites and associated infrastructure, improving the camping experience for visitors. The project helped with erosion and stormwater movement issues in the campgrounds that have mountainous ridges with highly erodible decomposed granite soils. Visitors to Mueller State Park can explore a diverse landscape of spring-fed meadows, montane forests, and Pikes Peak granite rock formations – all within 50 miles of Colorado Springs. The park is popular with people throughout the state, and campgrounds are almost entirely booked during the summer and shoulder seasons, leading to damage and deterioration of the campsites and associated infrastructure.

\$4,483,592

GOCO REIMBURSEMENTS FOR PARKS
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

FY 2023-24

\$5,183,550

TOTAL GOCO FUNDING AWARDED,
SUPPORTING 16 PROJECTS AT 11 STATE
PARKS, CPW ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES,
AND STATEWIDE DAM MAINTENANCE

FY 2023-24

SPECIES CONSERVATION, PROPAGATION OF AQUATIC SPECIES AT RISK, NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM, AND WETLANDS CONSERVATION

Colorado boasts some of the most diverse and abundant wildlife populations in North America, including an astonishing 960 wildlife species. CPW species conservation and wildlife reintroduction programs help many of the state's most cherished and iconic species prosper today despite emerging habitat and climate challenges.



Mist netting for bats at Dinosaur National Monument. ©D. Neubaum

BATS

Efforts to monitor bat populations across Colorado in response to the arrival of a deadly disease affecting bats, white-nose syndrome (WNS), continued in 2024 through a variety of survey methods. CPW and its partners participated in the continent-wide NABat effort, which deploys acoustic detectors at select sites yearly over four nights and uses recorded bat calls to confirm species occurrence. This data generates the first large-scale trends of bat species in Colorado and North America.

A variety of winter, spring, and summer work at bat hibernacula, foraging areas, and maternity roosts have allowed for the collection of skin swabs from Colorado bats to test for the presence of the fungus that causes WNS. Non-invasive efforts, such as guano collections at summer roost sites, have also been used to test for the fungus after bats groom the spores off their body and pass them through their digestive systems. CPW made proactive efforts to treat bats by vaccinating them for the first time in Colorado in the late summer of 2024. Individuals were given unique marks that will allow for them to be tracked over time to assess if the vaccinations are effective.

BLACK-FOOTED FERRET

Black-footed ferrets are a federally listed endangered species that were once thought to be extinct. Colorado is a hotbed of black-footed ferret reintroduction efforts, with eight new release sites since 2013. GOCO funding is vital in supporting pre-release mapping and plague management efforts, as well as post-release monitoring. Colorado's reintroduction efforts have kicked into high gear, with releases occurring on public and private lands in Larimer, Adams, Pueblo, Prowers, Baca, and Bent counties. Ferrets are one of many species that are highly dependent on prairie dogs, which means that plague management and conservation of prairie dog colonies is not only critical to supporting black-footed ferret populations but also benefits burrowing owls, swift foxes, raptors, reptiles, and other wildlife.

In 2023, 165 captive-reared black-footed ferrets were released at seven sites, including the newly added Pueblo Chemical Depot/Thatcher Ranch site. CPW and partners applied plague management practices to approximately 12,625 acres in the form of insecticide dust,



Swabbing a hibernating bat at the Paradox Mine. ©E. Phillips



2023 black-footed ferret release at the Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo County. ©Pueblo Chemical Depot

fipronil grain, and plague vaccine baits. In addition, a two-year study using scent dogs to detect the presence of black-footed ferrets found the survey technique could benefit monitoring efforts. CPW plans to release additional ferrets at current sites where plague management continues in late 2024. CPW has also established a five-year lease of approximately 1,821 acres on the Fort Collins Soapstone property for the black-footed ferret program. The agreement will allow CPW access to the enrolled lands for the reintroduction of black-footed ferrets, habitat monitoring and management at the site, and population monitoring of reintroduced and wild-born black-footed ferrets.



SOUTHERN WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN

In response to the 2010 petition to list the southern white-tailed ptarmigan, CPW launched a seven-year research project to help inform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review. CPW's research found that the ptarmigan is a resilient species occupying all suitable alpine habitats in Colorado, with stable populations with high genetic diversity. Though populations appeared to be healthy, CPW has continued to monitor the species using occupancy surveys in 2011, 2021, and 2022 in northern, central, and southern Colorado. Estimates of occupancy for males increased from 2011–2022. Conversely, female and chick occupancy declined. Occupancy surveys for white-tailed ptarmigan are being conducted in 2024 to determine if negative trends in female and chick occupancy continue.

Female white-tailed ptarmigan with chicks. ©Dillon Sapena



EASTERN BLACK RAIL

CPW continues to monitor the elusive eastern black rail, a federally threatened subspecies facing steep declines across its range. The eastern black rail is the smallest of the rails and inhabits wetlands with dense herbaceous cover. Most known populations are concentrated in coastal marshes along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Unfortunately, many of these populations are threatened by rising sea levels. Southeast Colorado appears to have a relatively stable and dense population of black rails. Beginning in 2018, CPW began long-term occupancy surveys across Southeast Colorado. CPW recently provided information to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of a range-wide data request to inform a Species Status Assessment update. The previous Species Status Assessment did not include any Colorado information, and our new data will inform occupancy modeling used to predict extinction risks.

Eastern black rail and chicks captured on CPW game camera in southeast Colorado. ©CPW

Pinyon jay flocks observed at one of the breeding colonies. ©CPW



PINYON JAYS

Pinyon jays are thought to be declining range-wide and are currently being reviewed for listing under the Endangered Species Act. Because of this concern for the species, CPW has been working to better understand jays' habitat use during the breeding season, assess threats to reproductive output, and coordinate with other agencies on land management practices to benefit and avoid detrimental impacts on jays.

In 2024, CPW conducted surveys to determine pinyon jay occupancy within 2.5 km X 2.5 km grids with the aid of point count surveys. When located, staff followed jays to their breeding colony to map the area using historic and active nests. Preliminary results are positive, as summarized below.

- › Surveyed 88 grids and completed 876 point counts
- › Located 30 active breeding colonies
- › Located 100 active pinyon jay nests (i.e., eggs in nest, female incubating, nestlings in nests)
- › Located 145 fresh and potentially probable active nests
- › Located 935 old pinyon jay nests
- › CPW plans to conduct surveys again in 2025, incorporating new grid locations.



INTEGRATED MONITORING IN BIRD CONSERVATION REGIONS

CPW partners with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies, the U.S.

Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and other partners to monitor bird populations across Colorado and much of the central U.S. The Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) program began in Colorado in 2008 and has since expanded across the Great Plains to the Great Basin. It is now the second-largest bird monitoring program in the country, encompassing Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and portions of 12 other states. CPW has provided funding for Colorado IMBCR surveys from 2008-2024. Data from these annual surveys are used to estimate occupancy, abundance, and trend through time. CPW relied heavily on IMBCR trend data to evaluate avian species for inclusion as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) for the 2025 revision of the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan. Several species came off Colorado's SGCN list because their trend appears stable; other species were added as Species of Greatest Information Need (SGIN) due to alarming trend data

BLACK SWIFT SURVEYS

The northern black swift (*Cypseloides niger borealis*) is a species of significant continental conservation concern. The North American Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data and the Partners in Flight 2016 Landbird Conservation Plan indicate that the species has experienced steep range-wide population declines in the United States and Canada. Colorado has more known occupied sites than all other western states and Canadian provinces combined. However, CPW lacks reliable estimates of abundance or population trends, largely due to the remote nature of black swift breeding sites near mountainous waterfalls. CPW partnered with Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to develop a robust monitoring protocol to estimate occupancy, abundance, and, through time, population trends. As part of this monitoring effort, CPW and Bird Conservancy biologists conducted repeat black swift surveys across Colorado in 2022-2024 and plan for a fourth year in 2025.

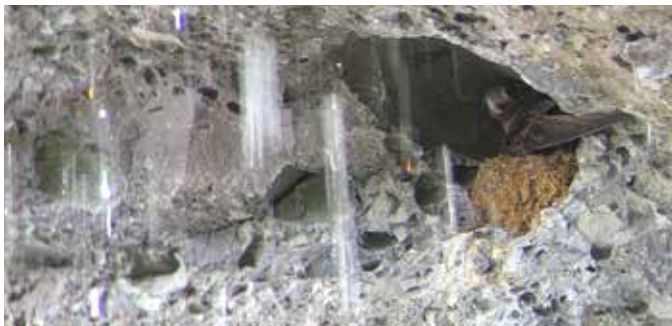


NASRF Technician David Avila with a dip net of Bonytail chub. ©Ricardo Romero/CPW

PROPAGATION OF AT-RISK AQUATIC SPECIES

The J.W. Mumma Native Aquatic Species Restoration Facility (NASRF), located in Colorado's beautiful San Luis Valley, was constructed in 2000 to facilitate the conservation of rare aquatic native species through captive propagation, genetic conservation, scientific research, and public education and awareness. Among the first facilities of its kind in the United States, NASRF works proactively to keep state species of greatest conservation need from reaching levels warranting federal protections.

For state fiscal year 2023-24, the hatchery produced and stocked over 215,000 threatened and endangered fish and boreal toad tadpoles. Since its inception, NASRF has stocked over 4.3 million aquatic animals into suitable waters and wetlands throughout Colorado. To date, NASRF has been successful in the captive propagation of all 12 species of fish currently on the unit, as well as the boreal toad. NASRF's stocking efforts include Arkansas darters and other plains fishes for the streams of the Eastern plains, Rio Grande chub and sucker for the Rio Grande basin, "three species" (bluehead sucker, flannel-mouth sucker, and roundtail chub) for the Colorado, San Juan, and Yampa River basins, and boreal toads for



Black swift on nest, Colorado. ©Evan Phillips/CPW



Fish Creek Falls black swift survey. ©Liza Rossi, CPW

montane wetlands. Through the continued development of improved culture techniques and new technologies, NASRF maximizes production while ensuring a safe and responsible culture environment for its native aquatic species at risk. The dedicated management and staff at NASRF bring over 100 years of combined fish culture experience in their mission to recover Colorado native aquatic species in decline. They are viewed as leaders in the field in Colorado and the nation.

BONYTAIL

Bonytail can grow to 22 inches or more in length and have been known to live up to 50 years. Bonytail were once common in portions of the upper and lower Colorado River basins. Today, the bonytail is among North America's most endangered fish species. Its distribution and numbers are so low that it is threatened with extinction. No reproducing populations are known in the wild. Bonytail populations declined sharply after the construction of dams resulted in temperature and flow changes and with the introduction of non-native fish species that compete with or prey upon bonytail. A significant component of bonytail recovery is propagating and stocking these fish. As a partner in the Upper Colorado River Recovery Program, CPW raises bonytail at the NASRF, where 5,500 bonytail are released annually in the Yampa River, Colorado River, and tributaries. Once stocked, bonytail are rarely recaptured during survey efforts, making long-term survival challenging to document and measure. However, increasing numbers of bonytail have been detected in recent years. Hatchery staff continue to experiment with improvements to rearing and stocking techniques. These changes have likely contributed to the increasing number of detections in the wild.

Holding a bonytail at NASRF hatchery ©Jenn Logan/CPW



Profile of Arkansas darter. ©John Woodling



Collecting Arkansas Darter eggs from artificial spawning substrate. ©Ricardo Romero/CPW

ARKANSAS DARTER

Arkansas darters occur only in parts of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. These fish inhabit low-gradient spring-fed streams and pools near shorelines, often with dense vegetation and silty, sandy, or sandy gravel substrates. Arkansas darters appear on several lists of concern: Colorado state threatened and Tier 1 species of Greatest Conservation Need (CPW 2015), sensitive (Bureau of Land Management), and near threatened (International Union for Conservation of Nature). Large-scale withdrawals of groundwater and stream dewatering are thought to be the most significant threat to Arkansas darter's viability. An important management action for conserving Arkansas Darters is establishing new populations in suitable habitats. Arkansas darters produced at CPW's J.W. Mumma Native Aquatic Species Restoration Facility are stocked annually in Southeastern Colorado streams. Stocking efforts show signs of success as CPW biologists have documented overwinter survival and multiple age classes of fish present in streams that were stocked by CPW.

COLORADO NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM

The Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP) has been showcasing and protecting Colorado’s natural treasures since 1977. With the support of GOCO, the program works to identify, designate, and protect Colorado’s most significant natural features through voluntary agreements with various landowners. Colorado’s Natural Areas contain rare and unique plants, wildlife, invertebrates, natural communities, geologic features, and fossils. CNAP helps to monitor and protect over 150 species of greatest conservation need on State Natural Areas. CNAP accomplishments during FY 2023-24 are highlighted below.

NEW STATE NATURAL AREA AND EXPANSIONS

CNAP completed the designation of a new state natural area, called Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie and also finalized the expansions of both White Rocks and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Areas. The three sites are all owned and managed by the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, a long-time partner of CNAP for nearly 50 years. The new designation and expansions were celebrated at a designation event in October 2023. Certificates of Designation, signed by Governor Polis and DNR Executive Director Dan Gibbs, were presented to the City of Boulder by CPW Director Jeff Davis.

CNAP VOLUNTEER STEWARD PROGRAM

CNAP’s volunteer program consists of nearly 60 dedicated volunteers who are assigned one or more State Natural Areas to steward. During FY 2023-24, CNAP volunteers contributed nearly 1,400 hours conducting annual monitoring of their assigned State Natural Areas, including reporting on site conditions, photo monitoring, and documenting species of greatest conservation need. Data volunteers collect help to provide valuable insights about each site for CNAP staff and the landowner. Volunteers get to know their assigned sites over many years; about half of the volunteers have been monitoring their sites for over 10 years.



2023 CNAP designation event. ©Ryan Jones/CPW



Corral Bluffs volunteer event. ©Ryan Jones/CPW

CNAP PUBLISHES 2021–2023 TRIENNIAL REPORT

By statute, CNAP is required to provide the governor with a report every three years that includes the status of each designated and registered State Natural Area. The [2021-2023 CNAP Triennial Report](#) not only includes the status of each State Natural Area but also provides helpful information on the program’s partnerships, volunteer steward program, conservation highlights, and accomplishments.

COLORADO NATURAL AREAS COUNCIL REAUTHORIZATION

The Colorado Natural Areas Council (CNAC) is a seven-member advisory council for CNAP that includes five Governor appointees, one representative from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, and one representative from the State Board of Land Commissioners. The CNAC was successfully reauthorized for another ten years with the passing of H.B. 24-1257 during the spring 2023 legislative session.

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

The CPW Resource Stewardship Program exists to protect, preserve, restore, and enhance the natural, scenic, scientific, and outdoor recreation values of Colorado's state parks and state recreation areas. GOCO funding supports full-time and part-time staff, conservation and planning projects, and program operations.



CPW Staff member working on a weed mapping survey.. ©CPW

THE RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM ADDRESSES SIX MAIN TOPIC AREAS:

- (1) The development of Resource Stewardship Plans and resource management standards for each state park;
- (2) the development and management of GIS natural and cultural resource data;
- (3) environmental and cultural resource reviews to promote resource conservation during capital projects;
- (4) invasive species management, revegetation, and restoration;
- (5) forest management; and
- (6) volunteer citizen science project management.

During FY 2023-24, CPW's Resource Stewardship Program utilized GOCO funds to accomplish many significant projects. A few highlights include:

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP TEAM

The Resource Stewardship Team has consisted of two full-time program managers and a dedicated and experienced team of contract employees since the merger of State Parks and the Division of Wildlife in 2011. The program has grown to include data collection and management support on historic, cultural/prehistoric, geological, paleontological, soils, restoration, and pollinator resources, as well as a much-expanded scope that utilizes volunteers in community science projects. This expansion has resulted in a large amount of spatial data that is managed and stored in a state parks resource management GIS. The two full-time employees have also expanded their roles to include new areas of expertise, increased contract services coordination, and additional supervision of seasonal employees. The program is happy to announce the first addition of a full-time employee to the team since 2010, increasing full-time program staff to three individuals. This employee's responsibilities will include management of state park monitoring programs, including volunteer community science-based programming and compliance support for the CPW development review administrative directive. The agency has approved the addition of a fourth full-time staff member who will be responsible for covering habitat and vegetation resources.

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP PLANNING

The first step in building a resource stewardship plan for a state park is the collection of natural and cultural resource data specific to each unique property. Resource stewardship plans help maintain the ecological integrity of parks now and for future generations while providing the best possible recreational experience for park visitors. During the past fiscal year, inventory projects were performed at state parks, including Rifle Gap, Rifle Falls, Harvey Gap, Fishers Peak, Highline Lake, Sweetwater Lake, Sweitzer Lake, Crawford Reservoir, Paonia Reservoir, Chatfield, Mueller, Eleven Mile, and Spinney Mountain. Staff completed surveys of breeding birds, raptors, reptiles, amphibians, rare plants, vegetation, paleontology, and cultural resources. Inventories also included geologic mapping and vegetation monitoring.



Stewardship staff installing kestrel nest box in a state park. ©CPW

FISHERS PEAK STATE PARK

The Resource Stewardship Program is involved in the design of Fishers Peak State Park to meet the goals of conservation and the provision of recreation opportunities in the park. Program staff are collaborating to create the Fishers Peak State Park management plan. Additionally, stewardship staff are working with Southeast Region staff, park staff, and consultants to create a development plan to identify the future infrastructure necessary for visitation and management of the property.

Program staff are also supporting efforts by the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety to stabilize historic mine sites in the area for safety and interpretation for the public. Collaborative efforts with the Colorado Department of Transportation, CPW Southeast Region staff, and CPW staff from other statewide programs are underway to create a highway underpass on Interstate 25 to facilitate migratory passage for wildlife. This CDOT project involves the consideration of data made available through the program regarding the federally endangered New Mexico meadow jumping mouse. Program staff provide natural and cultural resource data, analyze and interpret this data, and apply the information to these and other park projects.

Biological survey data for New Mexico meadow jumping mouse have also led to the identification of occupied habitat areas within the park, which enabled the creation of habitat maps to help visitation management and to ensure park infrastructure development avoids impacts to this protected species. Botanical surveys continue to reveal new and rare plant species, and projects are being developed to search for more important plant species on the property. These plant surveys support consultation with indigenous groups to inform how and where these communities may access the property for the collection and use of culturally significant plant species.

Surveys and monitoring of specific breeding locations of raptor species, analysis of the use of forest habitats for wildlife breeding, and surveys for bat species on the property were completed. Additionally, data from cultural resource inventory work and paleontological surveys, geological surveys, and a geologic hazards assessment, including fault lines, landslide areas, and rock fall areas, have been compiled into maps and reports to help development projects avoid areas that are unsuitable for infrastructure development.



Fishers Peak New Mexico Meadow Jumping Mouse endangered species report. ©CPW

HIGHLINE LAKE STATE PARK

Highline Lake State Park was expanded by acquiring a neighboring property, and future visitor access is currently being planned. The Resource Stewardship Program has continued to support the development of this property through consultation with capital construction staff to aid in the conservation of local species during and after construction projects. Avian, raptor, and herptile surveys were performed to increase the understanding of the park's wildlife to support conservation management on the property.

INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

The Program surveyed invasive plants (noxious weeds) in eleven state parks and created management plans for each park. Plans include maps of known weed populations, weed species identification aids, identification of priority treatment areas and weed species, treatment method recommendations, seasonal treatment calendars by species and park location, and revegetation specifications and seed mixes. These plans are all created specifically for each state park and their unique on-the-ground conditions. Tools were created and included in each plan to facilitate improved herbicide treatment efforts by contract sprayers and tracking of herbicide use by field staff.

REVEGETATION AND RESTORATION

Seeding specifications and seed mixes have been shared with the CPW dam safety engineers, capital development team, regional project managers, and state park land management partners to ensure that, where ground-disturbing projects occur, appropriate native plant species are seeded. Additionally, specifications to support the creation of pollinator habitats in state parks are being adopted by some parks for implementation. Seeding specifications outline how to perform seeding and planting projects; provide plant lists and seed mixes; and outline maintenance, care, and success criteria for pollinator habitat projects. Plant species are selected based on their presence in each park, their value to pollinators, and their availability with commercial seed and plant providers. Reviews of seed mixes are underway to ensure that restoration success and commercial availability are current.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE TRAINING FOR NEW STATE PARK RANGERS

The Resource Stewardship Program continues to support and lead natural and cultural resource training for the classes of new state park rangers. These trainings are provided by CPW Resource Stewardship Program staff and through collaboration with partner organizations. Training occurs in the areas of cultural resource management, plants, forestry, invasive species, bird biology and identification, pollinators and butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, and state park resource stewardship planning.



Avian training day for new rangers and DWMS at Chatfield State Park. ©CPW

COLORADO CONSERVATION DATA EXPLORER

The Resource Stewardship Program continues to lead agency efforts in collaborating with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program for the development and use of the Colorado Conservation Data Explorer or CODEX codex.cnhp.colostate.edu. This web-mapping tool allows users easy access to comprehensive spatial data related to habitats, occurrences of wildlife and rare plants, and other important natural resources. CODEX provides a critical decision support tool in advancing efforts to ensure that future development happens in ways that can maintain Colorado's rich wildlife and natural heritage. The tool has over 400 organizations regularly utilizing its features, including many of the coalitions participating in the Regional Partnerships Initiative.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

The program's forest management efforts responded to changing conditions in the state and successfully coordinated with partners to obtain funding and perform forest management projects in key areas to keep parks open and safe. CPW contracted with the conservation-focused tree nursery One Canopy to produce 1,300 native tree seedlings for state parks in FY 2023-2024. A wildfire resiliency study was completed at Lory State Park to determine opportunities for improving riparian function and sensitive wildlife habitats. Priority forest management projects were implemented on 40 acres at State Forest State Park and 9.5 acres at Jackson Lake State Park. Jackson Lake State Park was also the focus of a native tree/shrub revegetation project, and dozens of cottonwood whips and willow stakes were planted in strategic areas of the park as part of the long-term forest improvement effort. Finally, the program published a collection of ArcGIS Story Maps to illustrate forest management activities and photo monitoring that has occurred on state parks over the past two decades cpw.info/forest-management-state-parks. Continuing to invest in these forest management activities helps improve the resilience and ability of state parks to recover from the effects of wildfires, insects, and diseases. It also helps reduce the risk of wildfire to communities within the vicinity of many state parks.

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION

Wetlands are lands affected by water that support unique plants and soils, making up just two percent of Colorado's landscape but providing benefits to over 75 percent of the state's wildlife species. Protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands and riparian areas is vital to conserving 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, creating open space, educational opportunities, and economic benefits from hunting, fishing, and bird watching.

8

NEW WETLANDS PROJECTS

FY 2023-24

15

COMPLETED PROJECTS

FY 2023-24

4,700

ACRES OF WETLAND AND RIPARIAN
RESTORATION

FY 2023-24

CPW's Wetlands Program annually awards competitive grants to staff and external partners for projects that restore wetlands and riparian areas. These projects create new managed wetlands, improve the function and efficiency of existing wetlands, remove non-native invasive vegetation and replace it 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 2023-24, CPW awarded funds for eight new wetlands projects and three previously funded projects that will help to restore or enhance 2,200 acres of wetland and riparian habitat. The projects will improve habitat on two state wildlife areas, one state park, two county or municipal open space properties, two private properties, federal lands managed by the USFS and BLM, and lands managed by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe. These projects will benefit eight priority waterfowl species and 22 Tier 1 or 2 Species of Greatest Conservation Need as identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan, including greater sandhill crane, southwestern willow flycatcher, western yellow-billed cuckoo, New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, boreal toad, northern leopard frog, bluehead sucker, Rio Grande sucker, and Rio Grande chub. Each CPW dollar invested in these projects resulted in \$1.22 in matching funds contributed by 16 different partners, stretching GOCO and CPW funds further.



Also, in FY 2023-24, CPW staff and partners achieved more than 4,700 acres of wetland and riparian restoration in 15 completed projects. Highlights included shallow wetland improvements on CPW properties, including Jackson Lake State Park and the Centennial Valley State Wildlife Area, and completion of restoration plans for future work at Banner Lakes and Wellington State Wildlife Areas. Low-tech, process-based restoration projects reconnecting incised streams to their floodplains benefitted beavers and other priority species in multiple drainages in South Park, and Gunnison sage grouse in the Gunnison Basin. Finally, working with private landowners continued as a program emphasis. In conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife program and other partners, six projects were completed on private lands across Colorado in the Arkansas Headwaters, Colorado Headwaters, South Platte, Rio Grande, and Yampa/White/Green River watersheds.



Wetland cells at Jackson Lake State Park after being filled for the first time.
©CPW

Community Vitality & Equitable Access

Connecting all Coloradans to the outdoors.

With GOCO's support, CPW provides opportunities to connect Coloradans with outdoor experiences statewide. GOCO funding helps CPW manage and maintain 43 state parks and more than 300 state wildlife areas across the state. More than 4,500 volunteers and hundreds of partner organizations help CPW expand programs and activities. GOCO-supported trail projects provide a physical connection to Colorado's natural resources.







RECREATION MANAGEMENT ON STATE PARKS

GOCO partnerships protect the places that Coloradans enjoy and support the people who work there. GOCO funding helps cover staff and operating costs at all of Colorado's state parks. This historic support for state park operations has been invaluable to CPW and has contributed to the enjoyment of millions of park visitors since the inception of the GOCO program.

THE ANNUAL 'GEAR UP FOR SUMMER' EVENT AT ARKANSAS HEADWATERS RECREATION AREA (AHRA).

The purpose of this event is to get the local community of the Upper Arkansas River Valley outside, engaged, and ready for a safe, clean, and fun summer. CPW and partner groups set up booths and talk to visitors about recreation and safety to get them excited and geared up for summer. They also handed out free life jackets to the first 50 youth who attend!

18,503,228

STATE PARKS VISITATION
FY 2023-24

\$4,211,420

GOCO REIMBURSEMENTS FOR PARK
OPERATIONS
FY 2023-24

PHOTOS Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area Gear up event. ©CPW.



VOLUNTEERS

STORIES

A YEAR TO VOLUNTEER

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. The CPW Volunteer Program provides recruitment, screening, training, retention, support, and resources for state parks, wildlife areas, hatcheries, educational programs, and administrative offices across the state.

Partnerships and Trainings: The volunteer program continued statewide partnerships with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) and the Friends of Colorado State Parks (FCSP). VOC engaged volunteers to complete stewardship projects on CPW properties, and FCSP supported local Friends groups in their missions to support state parks.

Highlights include:

- ★ Funding 11 wildlife-related volunteer projects, including tree planting, state wildlife area visitor education, bear aware programs, archery range improvements, and fence removal or shift to wildlife-friendly fencing.
- ★ Hosting the annual education and volunteer training attended by 60 staff who work with volunteers. This year's theme was *Outdoors for All: Planning and Building Accessible Education and Volunteer Programs*. Sessions focused on universal design and physical and digital accessibility. Staff could stop by "world cafe" stations featuring a variety of topics and experiences, such as a pop-up sensory trail, neurodiversity and sensory tools, and check out adaptive hunting and angling equipment. As a result of this training, ten staff and volunteers became Certified Inclusivity Assessors. The statewide volunteer and interpretation programs also purchased and distributed 30+ pen friends and sensory bags to sites across the state. Pen friends are tools that read signs out loud for persons who are blind or have low vision. Sensory items benefit those who are neurodiverse or have sensory processing disorders.

A Year to Volunteer (Y2V) is an RV-centric, nationwide nonprofit volunteer organization that travels the country performing projects at state parks and other nonprofits. Y2V joined CPW at State Forest State Park, and in just two weeks, they provided what would have been a year's worth of work for one person.

They built a campground, painted, stained, and deep-cleaned cabins and cottages, cleared recyclable metals out of an old pit, dismantled picnic tables, built stairs on a trail, and upgraded and refreshed other campsites. Some volunteers, like heavy equipment operators, engineers, and carpenters, came with technical skills.

One important part of Y2V projects is the community and relationship building. Y2Vers also came from across the country, and many saw both the Rockies and a moose for the first time.



A Year to Volunteer participants work on a State Park project. ©Phil and Shar Roos

FIESTAS PATRIAS

Fiestas Patrias is a family festival in Colorado Springs, bringing people from diverse Hispanic origins to create a central fusion. This full-day event provides live music and dancing, Mexican wrestling, vendor booths, and plenty of food. Haydee Ullrich has volunteered for CPW wildlife and outreach booths around the state for 19 years. Thanks to her Spanish fluency and fun attitude, she was instrumental in making the inaugural CPW booth at Fiestas Patrias a success! She interacted with both English and Spanish speakers at the event through our wildlife trivia wheel and talked to people about the wildlife hides we had displayed.



Bluebird monitoring volunteers at Mueller State Park. ©Anna Miller

MUELLER STATE PARK BLUEBIRD PROJECT

The trails were wet, but the sun was shining when bluebird monitoring volunteers set out to check nest boxes at Mueller State Park. Volunteers learned how to respectfully check each box, saw old nests from last year, and honed their skills on how to tell a bluebird nest from a wren or sparrow nest.

A group of volunteers started making their way across a clearing to reach a box by the edge of some pine trees. The closer they got, the deeper the snow was. When the snow was up to their knees, they wondered if they should continue. If you have ever postholed through snow, you know it is not easy. The group was persistent and ended up crawling on their hands and knees to increase their surface area so to avoid falling through the snow! Volunteers successfully checked all 24 nesting boxes at Mueller.



Fiestas Patrias is a family festival in Colorado Springs. ©Dave Ullrich



“Partnering with individuals who choose to work with our agency is an incredible gift. Volunteers share their passion, and represent their community in ways I am not able to do. Fostering volunteer engagement with our shared resources is one of the greatest rewards of my job.”

MEGAN MCCONVILLE
WATER QUALITY SPECIALIST AND RIVER WATCH PROGRAM MANAGER

“Volunteering with CPW has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. I feel honored to invest my time and talents in an agency and with staff that mean so much to me personally and have taken my life in a new direction!”

CPW VOLUNTEER

275,318

VOLUNTEER HOURS

FY 2023-24

132

FTE EQUIVALENT OF VOLUNTEER HOURS

FY 2023-24

4,816

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS

FY 2023-24

\$10,010,563

VOLUNTEER VALUE

FY 2023-24

\$116,527

GOCO REIMBURSEMENTS FOR STATE PARKS VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

FY 2023-24

TRAILS

GOCO is an integral partner with the State Trails Program that provides funding for non-motorized trail projects. Funding in FY 2023-24 included an additional \$500,000 for a new grant opportunity, the Trails Stewardship grant, for trail maintenance crews who work on public lands. These increased 'boots on the ground' trail crews help to balance conservation and recreation by increasing the number of trail crew hours funded by the Program.

Along with the stewardship grant program, trail-related funding requests continue to increase yearly. The projects include planning and development, organization support, trail maintenance and reroutes, and new construction on state and federal lands.

4

MILES OF TRAIL PLANNING
FY 2023-24

19

MILES OF NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION
FY 2023-24

121

MILES OF TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND
RECONSTRUCTION
FY 2023-24

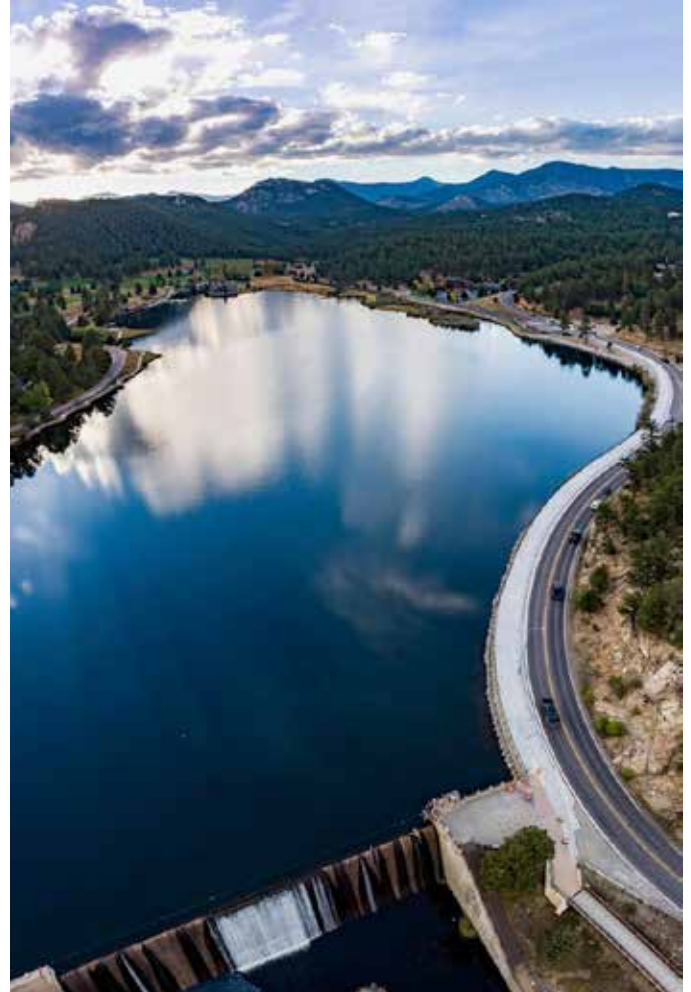
\$2,849,115

GOCO TOTAL REIMBURSEMENTS FOR
THE TRAILS PROGRAM
FY 2023-24

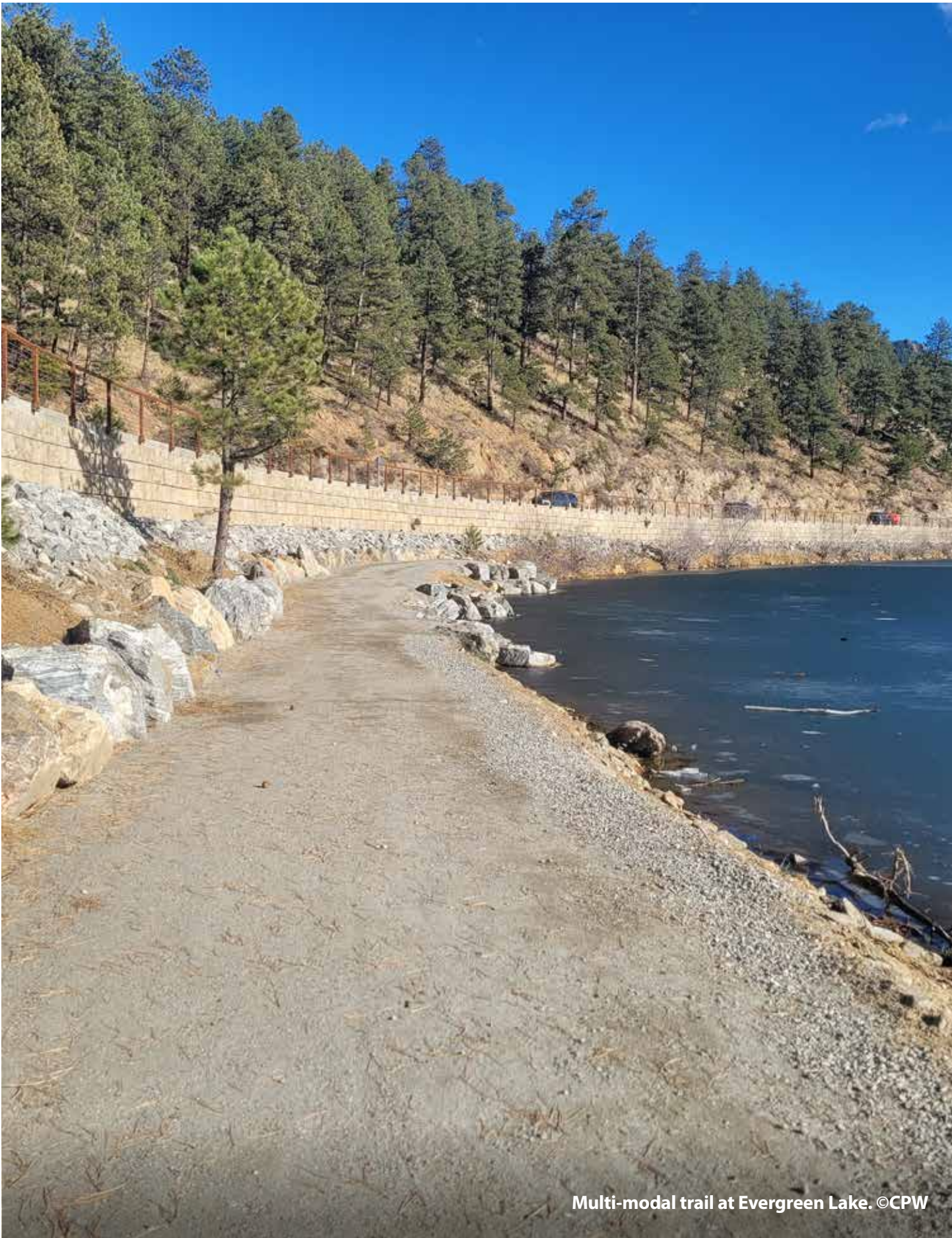
FEATURED PROJECT

EVERGREEN LAKE TRAIL

This project delivered a multi-modal, accessible trail on the north side of Evergreen Lake, replacing an existing narrow, soft-surface trail built in 1988. The new trail improves access to recreational opportunities, creates off-street bike and pedestrian connections to downtown and local recreation destinations, and improves safety for trail users.



Multi-modal, accessible trail on the north side of Evergreen Lake. ©CPW



Multi-modal trail at Evergreen Lake. ©CPW

CPW WEBSITE REDESIGN

CPW launched its newly redesigned website to make its online presence more accessible, visually appealing, and informative for customers. The launch is a starting point, not a finish line. CPW staff listened to customers and constituents over the years and used that feedback to re-envision information flows and build an entirely new website for the agency on a proven CMS platform. The new website is more modern and built with the customer experience in mind, making pathways to desired information faster and more seamless.

“Reimagining a website as robust as ours is no easy task, and while we know changes are always a challenge, we think you’ll find this website more dynamic, functional, and easier for you, our customers and partners, to use,” said Branding and Communications Section Manager Rebecca Ferrell.

Below are some examples of how CPW is making significant improvements for customers.

- **Enhanced Accessibility** - The new site meets all state and federal accessibility requirements, ensuring that CPW continues to work toward a “Colorado for All.” These requirements make content easier for screen readers to assist low-vision or blind customers and provide translation into multiple languages.
- **Website Audit** - CPW reviewed all existing web content to eliminate repetition, consolidated pages, updated content, and used analytics to improve visitors’ online journeys for agency information.
- **New Website Navigation** - Menus have changed to help users quickly navigate to their areas of interest.
- **Updated State Park Finder** - Graphic cards with images and a park description give an immediate sense of each park’s features and activities.
- **Added mapping and event tools** - The new website is a robust information base that will adapt and evolve for years to come, including an enhanced ability to search for park events, state wildlife areas, bodies of water, and more.

Screen shots from CPW's newly redesigned website. ©CPW ▶



Got Summer Plans?

Camping reservations can be made year-round and a maximum of six months before your arrival date.

[Reserve your campsite today! →](#)



i Registration Required: Please register for this event.

Weekend Birding Walk

Saturday, January 11

📍 Barr Lake State Park

Join volunteer naturalists for a walk in the park!

[View Details →](#)



Walk-In-Access Program Dove Hunting

COLORADO OUTDOOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative (RPI) convenes a broad spectrum of interests to collaborate in advancing solutions to conserve Colorado's outdoors for people and wildlife. CPW and GOCO launched the initiative in 2021, offering grant funds to coalitions to join the Colorado Outdoor Partnership and commit to both regional and statewide conservation and recreation collaboration and planning. CPW is now in the 7th grant cycle, having awarded over \$4.9 million to 20 regional partnerships across the state. These partnerships, covering more than 75 percent of Colorado, are committed to bringing regional perspectives to Colorado's Outdoors Strategy, a process led by GOCO, CPW, DNR, and the Governor's Office to advance a collaborative vision for conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable recreation.

There continue to be countless success stories from these regions, including two new regional conservation and recreation plans, the development of several new data dashboards and decision support tools, and an increase in collaboration across outdoor interest areas and sectors. New partnerships formed on Colorado's Eastern Plains are filling an essential geographic gap, while other more established partnerships hired full-time coordinators. The Metro Denver Nature Alliance brought additional funding to its own grant program, awarding six projects that advance its conservation and recreation vision while increasing equitable access to nature. CPW convened monthly meetings with Regional Partnership staff leads to share information and resources along with lessons learned and best practices. Every Regional Partnership was engaged in developing Colorado's Outdoors Strategy, a statewide vision that elevates common goals, amplifies regionally rooted efforts, provides data and tools to inform local decision-making, and advances coordinated, statewide strategies and funding for conservation, outdoor recreation, and climate resilience. CPW is anticipating the launch of the Strategy in 2025.



Top and middle photos ©Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance



©Metro DNA

Youth Connections

Inspiring the next generation of Coloradans.

GOCO-supported programs help CPW provide opportunities to youth and students to learn first-hand about Colorado's natural resources.







OUTREACH, EDUCATION, AND INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

With GOCO support, CPW is able to offer a wide variety of programming throughout the year to students, families, park visitors, teachers, and volunteers. While the goals of these programs vary, they all work to spread CPW's passion and mission for the incredible parks and wildlife resources of the state.

ANGLER EDUCATION

The Angler Education programs held more events and saw marked increases in attendance in 2024. The total number of events was up by 19 percent over last year, and the total number of participants was up 32 percent. CPW changed its approach this year in two key ways. First, the statewide program staff distributed more equipment to state parks so the individual parks could host more events. Gear was sent to Staunton, Barr Lake, Boyd Lake, Chatfield, Ridgway, Pueblo, and Mueller State Parks, to name a few.

Second, staff added a few larger-scale events back into the schedule in 2024 that they did not host in previous years. Two large events that were added are The International Sportsmen's Expo (ISE) and Safe Summer Kickoff on Get Outdoors Day. Safe Summer Kickoff had close to 1,000 people in attendance, and 896 people attended CPW's fishing experience at ISE. Those two large events accounted for two-thirds of the participant increase over last year.

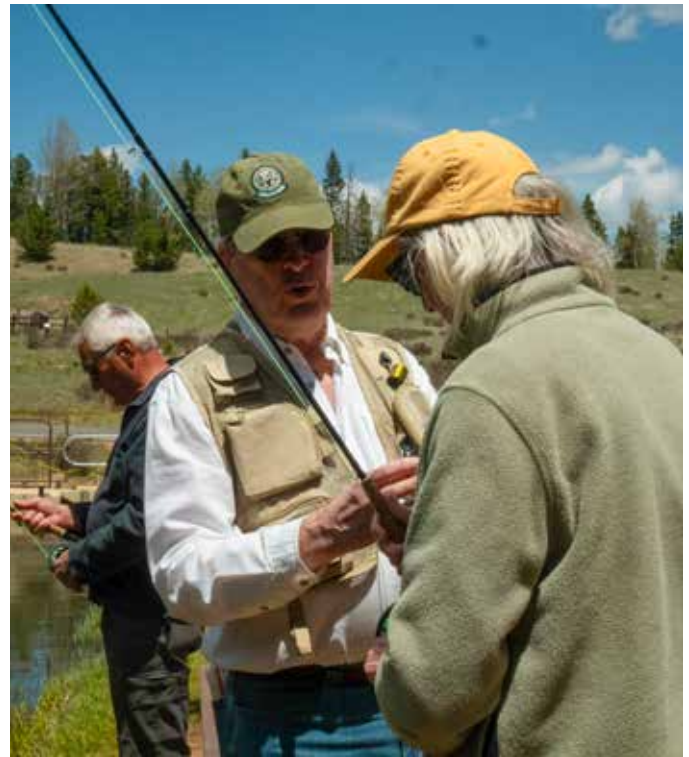
Angler Education staff also hosted two Hispanic fishing days, "Dia de Pesca," one in May and one in September. Together, they had over 500 total participants. Attendees practiced casting (spin and fly), got a free rod/reel combo, and learned how to fish for trout at local parks in their neighborhoods. All instruction and printed educational materials were in Spanish. These events were very well received by the local community and made possible by partnerships with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Denver Parks and Recreation, and the Colorado Wildlife Federation.

©CPW

FISHING CLINICS AT STATE PARKS

MUELLER STATE PARK

Fly Fishing Basics is one of Mueller's most popular summer programs. The program is offered two to four times a month between May and September. Groups range in age from 8 years old and up, with a size of 10 to 30 participants in each session. The program is two hours long and covers parts of a rod, how to tie basic knots, casting practice, and trying to catch a fish at Dragonfly Pond. In 2024, Fly Fishing Basics Plus classes were offered as well. This class is for Fly Fishing Basics program participants who want to learn more. The Plus program involves a three-hour audiovisual presentation covering different rod setups, how to read the water, and detailed information on the available gear. When time allows, fly choice is also covered. After the presentation, participants spend an hour or more on the water practicing all that they learned.



Fly fishing clinic at Mueller State Park ©CPW

STAUNTON STATE PARK

Staunton's angler education program hosted around 50 drop-in events in 2024, in addition to over 20 private events for youth organizations. Staunton also added fly-fishing programs to their schedule this year and hosted nine fly-fishing events. Staunton's fishing program is an amazing example of volunteers taking the lead at a park and using their skills and passion to build an amazing program.



©CPW

331

NUMBER OF ANGLER EDUCATION CLINICS

FY 2023-24

11,588

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

FY 2023-24

INTERPRETATION PROGRAMS

On September 3rd, 2023, Trinidad Lake State Park hosted its first Adult Novice Archery Program. This program was run by archery volunteers and rangers and was catered specifically for adults interested in archery but who may have never had the opportunity to try it. The volunteers, along with park staff and the local District Wildlife Manager, made this event a success for all who participated.

SCHOOLS AND OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

SCHOOLS AND OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments (SOLE) program is CPW's overarching formal education program. It serves early childhood, kindergarten through 12th grade, community college, and university-level students and educators by creating impactful connections to the outdoors.

The program's goal is to be a leading source for natural resource related education resources, directly aligned with state academic standards, so that educators and students have a strong relationship and knowledge base of the outdoors, which inspires behavior changes that increase stewardship and conservation best practices.

The focus is to connect students and educators to the natural resources of Colorado. While early childhood and elementary students will build this connection through play and exploration, middle school through college students will expand their understanding of natural resources through exploring research and work-based learning opportunities.

The strategy is to develop high-quality resources and facilitate hands-on, relevant, nature-based learning experiences so that students and educators will have the opportunity to deepen their connection to Colorado's natural resources and the work being done by CPW.

SOLE GRANTS

CPW supported 31 schools with approximately \$130,000 in funding. SOLE schools used the funding to go on a total of 102 field trips, provide opportunities for families to explore the outdoors together, improve outdoor learning spaces, purchase resources to enhance students' understanding of science and social studies standards or equipment to experience recreational activities like camping, skiing, archery, and biking.

VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

SOLE connected with K-12 classrooms across the state with programming delivered from our virtual studio, providing engaging insights into mapping, ecosystems, and adaptations. Through the 30 programs that were offered, SOLE Educators were able to connect with over 1,200 students.

TEACHER EXTERNSHIP PROGRAM

To support middle and high school teachers, including those teaching Career and Technical Education (CTE) Natural Resource pathways, CPW partnered with Colorado's Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to expand the summer teacher externship program. Eight teachers from across the state had the opportunity to dig into the topic of resiliency and the stressors for aquatic ecosystems with experts across the agency. From learning how to perform fish necropsies to look for parasites, to conducting titrations to determine water quality within local watersheds, to using microscopes to identify microscopic invasive species, this cohort of educators will build and test lessons in their classrooms based on these experiences. All educators in this program were provided a stipend for their time as the lessons they develop will be given to CPW to provide as a free resource for other educators.

OUTDOOR UNDERSTANDING FOR TEACHERS (OUT)

Regional Coordinators hosted several professional development courses that provided K-12 teachers and education partners enriching experiences through unique opportunities to engage with nature and enhance their outdoor teaching skills.

In the Southeast Region, "Hand in Hand, Caring for the Land" was held in Fremont County to highlight various conservation issues and what is being done regarding those issues. Some of the topics teachers learned about were the reintroduction of ferrets, bear aware issues, wildlife crossings, and the local Superfund site. The Pikes Peak OUT class theme was "Exploring Ecosystems of the Pikes Peak Region," where teachers explored the prairie, riparian areas, and montane ecosystems. They were able to participate in fish shocking on Fountain Creek, learned about Leave No Trace and the paint mines, and even had the opportunity to camp and do yoga in the sun at Mueller State Park as part of their experience.

In the Southwest Region, educators participated in an immersive three-day backpacking leadership trip, where they had the chance to learn and apply the Leave No Trace curriculum, gain essential Wilderness First Aid knowledge, and participate in outdoor team-building activities within the stunning Uncompahgre Wilderness. Another highlight was a 'WILD About Big Cats' workshop, where teachers learned from leading experts about Colorado's native cat species and wildlife tracking. A 'Wildlife Diseases' workshop allowed educators to delve into the health of wildlife with expert insights into the origins and impacts of disease threats to conservation. Participants explored how they can empower students to advocate for positive actions regarding wildlife health.



Achieve Academy Archery. ©CPW

”

“This was many students and chaperones first time camping. Many parents expressed their gratitude for having a guided service be able to teach them the safety and protocols for camping. Bonding and social emotional skills that happened during the trip was carried throughout the year.”

4TH GRADE TEACHER

“The SOLE program allows us to bring our curriculum to life with hands-on experiences and real life experiences out in the field. Many of our students would never get to experience these things without this program. Students and their families are so grateful that we are able to bring these experiences to them through SOLE and our school. Thank you!”

4TH GRADE TEACHER

“During our visit to the Montezuma Historic Society we had two students who learned the history of their own family (ranching in the area). They were so excited to see the impact their family had on our area.”

4TH GRADE TEACHER



Riverwatch externship. ©CPW

COLORADO YOUTH CORPS ASSOCIATION



Colorado Parks and Wildlife recently completed its 24th season of partnership with the Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA), a statewide network of locally run youth corps. Youth corps crews made substantial contributions to CPW's lands and the people who visit them.

Work included trail construction and maintenance, habitat restoration, fence removal, fire mitigation, and invasive plant removal.

In total, CYCA crews completed:

31 weeks of work at 15 state parks, ten state wildlife areas, and two state fish hatcheries

In addition to the valuable work completed, the partnership also provides young people with opportunities for professional development, skill building, environmental education, and career exploration. Corps members gain an awareness of the agency, meet and work alongside CPW staff, and learn about the various job pathways available. CYCA engaged 236 corps members during the year, many of whom identify with traditionally under-represented races, ethnicities, and genders. Ultimately, this partnership is helping to improve our lands, inspire stewardship, and train and recruit the next generation of natural resource professionals.



12,570
HOURS OF CYCA LABOR

31
WEEKS OF WORK AT:

15 STATE PARKS
10 STATE WILDLIFE AREAS
2 STATE FISH HATCHERIES



TOP TO BOTTOM: Trail crew at Lory State Park; Trail crew at Lathrop State Park; CYCA Corps member at Bellvue Watson Hatchery. ©CPW

YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The purpose of the CPW Youth Internship Program (YIP) is to employ and expose youth to natural resource careers and recruit new and diverse talent into the CPW workforce. YIP internships are designed to engage and mentor youth; provide practical experiences, skills, and opportunities; facilitate networking opportunities with CPW professionals; and provide exposure to various CPW career paths.

YIP places interns in a variety of positions throughout CPW. In FY 2023-24, 64 internship positions were funded. YIP interns assisted CPW program areas, including state parks, aquatic biology, wildlife biology, fish hatcheries, engineering, water quality monitoring, administrative support, and education and interpretation.



CPW youth intern participant. ©CPW



QUOTES FROM YIP INTERNS

"I have learned so many things doing various ride alongs with officers that I thought I knew but didn't. I gained plenty of knowledge with the fish biologist from Fort Collins as the fish side of things are not my strong suit. I learned how to handle certain heavy machinery that I wasn't as familiar with. I learned plenty of things to help me prepare to becoming a CPW District Wildlife Manager."

"One of my favorite experiences during my CPW internship (I have so many!) was when I got to assist with a mountain goat/bighorn sheep survey on Mt. Evans. We met at the trailhead before sunrise and set out to get to our location for spotting the animals. During the survey I was able to see goats, a group of rams, marmots, the largest bull elk the team lead had ever seen, and countless wildflowers and high alpine succulents. We also saw some kids (baby mountain goats)."

"(CPW) was constantly sharing professional development opportunities, as well as eliminating any barriers to attend like funds, lodging, travel, unfamiliarity, etc. Making the interns feel heard, seen, and treated just as any other professional in the agency."

"I've learned a lot about both my capabilities and interests! I've gained a better understanding about my passions and niches within the conservation industry to help better guide me in future career pursuits."

"I learned to be confident in my position, knowledge, and experience, as well as confident to ask questions to peers and management without feeling like a burden. I learned so much about working in and for the outdoors, like tool use, use of heavy machinery, collecting data, developing public speaking skills, etc."

"One memorable experience I had while interning at CPW was netting fish out of Lake Loveland for fish counts. The crew was able to net a 15lb Channel Catfish that was a tank. It was a great time and awesome experience!"

"During my time as an environmental educator/ park interpreter, I had the ability to facilitate school field trips to the park. In the 15 trips I ended up completing, there were consistently groups of students that had never visited the park before. Many of these students lived just miles up the road, but had never gotten the opportunity to explore nature. Seeing students get the opportunity to make their own connections to the area and get to become more comfortable being in the outdoors was one of the most rewarding parts of the job. Seeing their confidence and curiosity grow in the short time of their visit and the possibility of having an influence on students' relationships with the outdoors was an impact of this job that will stay with me."



Bird watcher at Harvey Gap State Park ©Vic Schendel/CPW

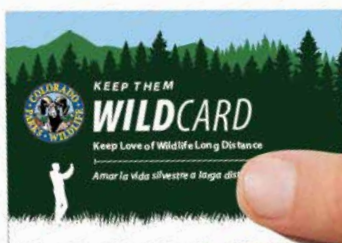
WATCHABLE WILDLIFE

Wildlife Viewing programs help connect people to wildlife through educational festivals, outreach programs, and other events to promote ethical viewing skills, provide experiences to observe wildlife, and share biological and ecological information to encourage awareness and understanding of Colorado's wildlife.

WILDLIFE VIEWING

Intentionally observing, feeding, or photographing wildlife, or visiting or maintaining natural areas to benefit wildlife – is one of the most popular outdoor recreation activities in the United States. According to the 2022 National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, over 57 percent of the U.S. population 16 years or older identify as wildlife viewers. CPW provided numerous opportunities to view and learn more about wildlife, from collaborative events like wildlife festivals to local nature walks at a state park. For example, in 2024, Mueller State Park offered nine bird hikes throughout the year, including special opportunities to walk with a wildlife biologist and another with local author of Mountain Birds of Teller County, Joe LaFleur. CPW also held wildlife festivals and other events across the state.

Many wildlife-related outreach events focus on how to view wild animals from a safe distance. CPW employed a new tool in this endeavor, called the “Keep Them WILDCard,” a playing-card-sized card that uses cut-out windows to help keep a safe distance from a number of wildlife species. Inspired by a similar card produced by Parks Canada, this card helps protect both people and wildlife.



Grant Detail FY 2023–2024

Section I of Article XXVII of the Colorado Constitution describes eight basic objectives for GOCO investments in outdoor recreation and wildlife programs:▶

OUTDOOR RECREATION

- ★ Establish and improve state parks and recreation areas throughout Colorado.
- ★ Develop appropriate public information and environmental education resources on Colorado's natural resources at state parks, recreation areas, and other locations throughout the state.
- ★ Acquire, construct, and maintain trails and river greenways.
- ★ Provide water for recreational purposes through the acquisition of water rights or through agreements with holders of water rights, all in accord with applicable state water law.

WILDLIFE

- ★ Develop wildlife watching opportunities.
- ★ Implement educational programs about wildlife and wildlife environment.
- ★ Provide appropriate programs for maintaining Colorado's diverse wildlife heritage.
- ★ Protect crucial wildlife habitats through the acquisition of lands, leases, or easements and restore critical areas.

The following tables contain information about GOCO reimbursements to CPW in FY 2023-24 organized by the structure outlined in the Colorado Constitution.

STATE PARKS PURPOSE: ESTABLISH AND IMPROVE STATE PARKS AND RECREATION

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
19200	Park Improvements	8,352,917	7,363,983	988,934
19201	Park Improvements 2	3,942,000	3,143,524	798,476
20171	Land Acquisition and Leases	700,000	100,000	600,000
20192	Trails Grants Program	1,000,000	965,570	34,255
20200	Park Improvements	6,991,024	5,046,818	-
20223	Fuels Mitigation Management Program	300,000	219,330	80,670
21200	Park Improvements	5,054,334	2,287,061	1,461,103
21223	Fuels Mitigation Management Program	300,000	65,660	234,340
21225	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	60,720	9,471
22200	Park Improvements	6,119,195	2,374,861	1,214,493
22223	Fuels Mitigation Management Program	300,000	-	16,409
22225	Director's Innovation Fund	25,000	21,819	-
23172	Capital Development Program	1,010,749	-	1,008,222
23173	Natural Resource Management Program	1,292,500	-	1,292,500
23174	Invasive and Noxious Weed Management Program	266,726	-	246,084
23175	Recreation Management on State Parks	4,111,420	-	4,111,420
23200	Park Improvements	5,183,550	-	20,586
23223	Fuels Mitigation Management Program	100,000	-	-
23225	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	-	47,630
24172	Capital Development Program	1,010,749	-	-
24173	Natural Resource Management Program	1,292,500	-	-
24174	Invasive and Noxious Weed Management Program	225,530	-	-
24175	Recreation Management on State Parks	4,211,420	-	-
24200	Park Improvements	6,656,269	-	-
24225	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	-	-
24532	FY24 CPW Centennial Projects - Outdoor Recreation	11,900,000	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 70,570,883	\$ 21,649,346	\$ 12,164,594

STATE PARKS PURPOSE: PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
21222	Website Redesign	700,000	325,589	195,754
23187	Public Information Program	296,000	-	296,000
23188	Environmental Education and Youth Programs	1,167,603	-	1,167,603
23189	Volunteer Programs	189,459	-	116,527
24187	Public Information Program	296,000	-	-
24188	Environmental Education and Youth Programs	1,500,000	-	-
24189	Volunteer Programs	73,040	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 4,222,102	\$325,589	\$1,175,883

STATE PARKS PURPOSE: TRAILS AND RIVER GREENWAYS

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
18192	Trails Grant Program	1,000,000	834,329	128,223
18230	Colorado The Beautiful Trails Grant Program	2,988,006	2,111,423	801,176
18233	Legacy Loop - Rock Island Trail	500,000	-	-
21192	Trails Grant Program	1,000,000	314,542	332,444
21221	Trails in State Parks	500,000	423,075	71,740
22192	Trails Grant Program - Capital	1,000,000	71,123	559,955
22221	Trails in State Parks	500,000	56,290	415,553
23191	State Trails Program - Operating	352,039	-	352,039
23192	Trails Grant Program - Capital	1,500,000	-	138,894
23221	Trails in State Parks Program	500,000	-	49,091
24191	State Trails Program - Operating	400,000	-	-
24192	Trails Grants Program - Capital	1,500,000	-	-
24221	Trails in State Parks	500,000	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 12,240,045	\$ 3,810,782	\$ 2,849,115

STATE PARKS PURPOSE: WATER FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
21194	Water Acquisitions and Leases	300,000	206,463	93,537
22194	Water Acquisitions and Leases	300,000	56,621	153,547
23193	Water Program	86,919	-	85,978
24193	Water Program	22,056	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 708,975	\$ 263,084	\$ 333,061
	GRAND TOTAL, STATE PARKS PURPOSE	\$ 87,742,005	\$ 26,048,801	\$ 17,122,653

WILDLIFE PURPOSE: HABITAT MANAGEMENT				
GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
19253	Aquatic Habitat Improvement	2,000,000	1,784,329	126,070
19259	Fort Collins Service Center	2,500,000	1,228,223	1,156,187
20153	Wetlands Conservation	1,100,000	645,866	453,184
20250	Protection and Restoration of Wildlife Habitat	3,600,000	3,115,313	282,248
21153	Wetlands Conservation	1,100,000	793,725	300,838
21252	Wildlife Small Capital	2,000,000	1,943,117	56,883
22150	Acquire High Priority Habitat- Capital	1,223,088	-	5,750
22153	Wetlands Conservation	1,100,000	522,466	348,027
22531	FY22 CPW Centennial Projects	1,564,500	1,564,500	-
23151	Acquire High Priority Habitat - Operations	519,659	-	519,659
23152	Enhance Habitat on Lands and Water	1,000,000	-	1,000,000
23153	Wetlands Conservation	1,100,000	-	238,791
23154	GIS Habitat Information	464,419	-	463,017
24150	Acquire High Priority Habitat - Capital	4,012,288	-	-
24151	Acquire High Priority Habitat - Operations	450,884	-	-
24152	Enhance Habitat on Lands and Water	1,000,000	-	-
24153	Wetlands Conservation	1,100,000	-	-
24154	GIS Habitat Information	410,186	-	-
23531	FY23 CPW Centennial Projects	6,250,000	-	6,250,000
24531	FY24 CPW Centennial Projects	22,985,500	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 55,480,524	\$ 11,597,539	\$ 11,200,653

WILDLIFE PURPOSE: SPECIES PROTECTION				
GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
23155	Propagation of Aquatic Species at Risk	488,129	-	465,110
23161	Threatened, Endangered, and Native Species Conservation	4,740,346	-	4,740,346
24155	Propagation of Aquatic Species at Risk	488,129	-	-
24161	Threatened, Endangered, and Native Species Conservation	4,740,346	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 10,456,950	-	\$ 5,205,456

WILDLIFE PURPOSE: WILDLIFE EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENT

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
21163	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	51,639	23,000
21166	Website Redesign	1,300,000	604,665	363,542
22163	Director's Innovation Fund	25,000	24,450	-
23158	Youth Programs	918,637	-	918,637
23159	Education and Volunteer Programs	400,183	-	400,183
23160	Angler Education	161,000	-	161,000
23163	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	-	49,961
24158	Youth Programs	918,637	-	-
24159	Education and Volunteer Programs	400,183	-	-
24160	Angler Education	161,000	-	-
24163	Director's Innovation Fund	75,000	-	-
	Totals this section:	\$ 4,509,640	\$ 680,753	\$ 1,916,323

WILDLIFE PURPOSE: WILDLIFE VIEWING

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
23162	Wildlife Viewing	144,899	-	144,899
24162	Wildlife Viewing	144,899	-	-
	Grand total, Wildlife Purpose	\$ 70,736,912	\$ 12,278,292	\$ 18,467,330

PARTNERSHIPS

GOCO LOG	DESCRIPTION	AWARD (\$)	TOTAL PRIOR REIMBURSEMENTS (\$)	FY 2023-24 REIMBURSEMENT REQUEST (\$)
21049	Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships (Comp)	320,000	256,113	63,887
21249	Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative	160,000	128,057	31,943
21298	RESTORE Program	250,000	133,679	116,321
21299	Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative	160,000	128,057	31,943
22351	Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative (Capacity)	500,000	55,090	115,501
22352	Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships (Regrant)	3,000,000	-	761,923
	Totals this section:	\$4,390,000	\$ 700,995	\$1,121,519
	GRAND TOTAL, INCLUDING OUTDOOR RECREATION, WILDLIFE, AND PARTNERSHIPS	\$ 162,868,917	\$ 39,028,088	\$ 36,711,502

CPW MISSION

The mission of Colorado Parks and Wildlife is to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state parks system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources.

GOCO MISSION

To help preserve, protect, enhance, and manage the state's wildlife, park, river, trail and open space heritage.



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