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GOCO.org



Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) receives up to half of Colorado Lottery proceeds each year and invests that funding in improving Colorado's trails, parks, wildlife, open spaces, and rivers.

Created by a vote of the people in 1992, GOCO is managed by an independent board and uses no tax dollars.



Colorado Parks and Wildlife programs and facilities receive half of GOCO's funding each year for state parks and wildlife work.

El informe anual está en español a goco.org/report

Designed by **Laura Hartgerink, Signify, LLC.**
Cover photo by **Cameron Davidson, courtesy of The Nature Conservancy.**



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

PROTECT | CONNECT | INSPIRE

Looking at the numbers, you might think 2019-2020 was a year like any other for Great Outdoors Colorado and its partners—one that saw critical land conservation projects close, parks and playgrounds built, trails constructed, and communities engaged.

The GOCO board invested \$77.8 million in grants through 12 programs for 101 conservation and recreation projects and in Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Our steadfast partners broke ground on and completed projects that protected and restored land, rivers, and wildlife habitat; sustained local agriculture and supported local economies; and created greater outdoor access for youth, families, and Coloradans of all ages.

But that's not where the work stopped. The COVID-19 pandemic struck, and Colorado communities, their systems, and their people were tested. A racial justice awakening dawned, and many organizations, including us, stopped to consider ways to build a brighter, more inclusive future.

GOCO staff and board did their most introspective and forward-looking work in years. We wrapped up a 16-month strategic planning process that resulted in an evolution in our role as a funder—a vision to become more dynamic, proactive, and values-based. We imagined a new way of working with partners to elevate community priorities, create efficiencies, and collaborate more closely. We developed a strategic spending plan that will help us invest in more projects with lasting benefits for future generations. And we centered our work in equity, so that we break down barriers to our funding, working with partners to improve outdoor opportunities and experiences for more people and communities.

2020 would have been one of transition, as we closed one strategic plan and implemented a new one, but we couldn't have anticipated that our flexibility and community-centered approach would be tested so soon. The pandemic forced a quick pivot of our programmatic offerings in response to needs of partners facing stalled projects, disrupted operations, and new capacity constraints.

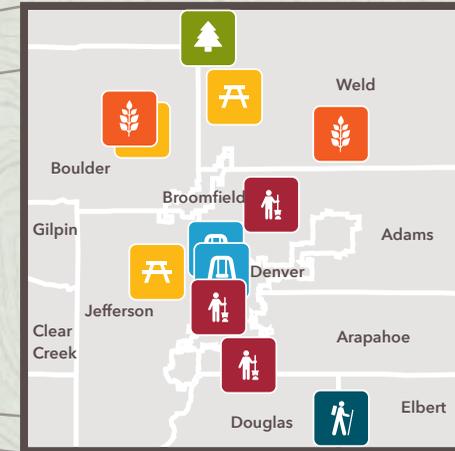
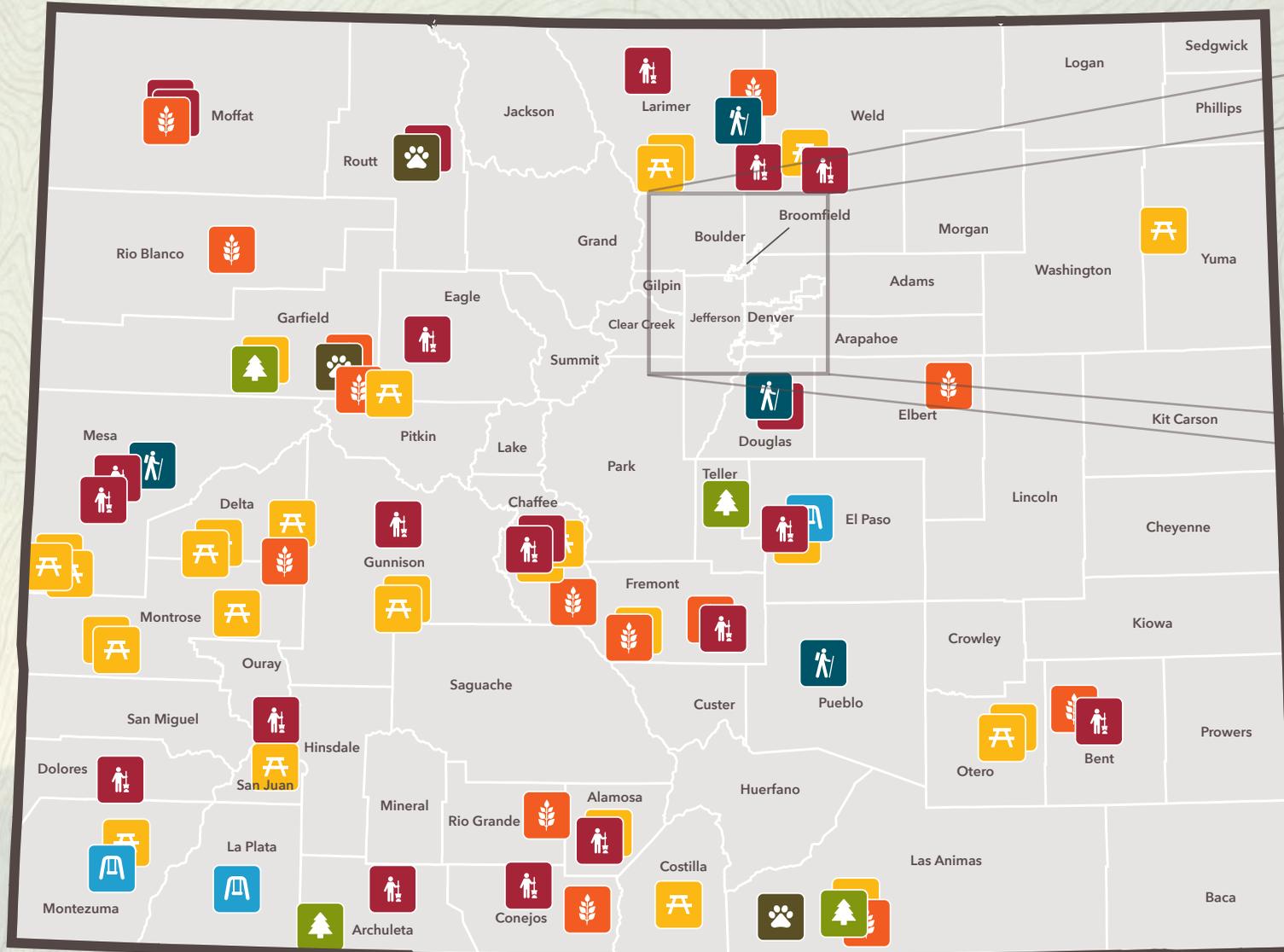
COVID-19's impacts on Coloradans' physical and mental well-being and our economy aren't short-lived. And the pursuit of equity and inclusion isn't a short-term aim. In the years to come, we can be sure Colorado communities and GOCO's partners will face challenges. But we're ready, and we're hopeful. Because we know these to be true: Coloradans have grit. Our communities are resilient. And getting outside makes our lives better.

Chris Castilian
Executive Director



GOCO At-a-Glance

Projects funded in FY 2020*



KEY

-  Park/Planning
-  Habitat Restoration
-  Land Conservation
-  School Playground
-  State Park
-  Trail
-  Wildlife

Visit GOCO.org/projects for an interactive version of this map.

In FY 2020, our grantees put GOCO funds to work for:

101 PROJECTS FUNDED

INVESTED IN **34** counties

43,304 ACRES CONSERVED and **286,047** acres of habitat RESTORED

22 SPECIES OF WILDLIFE PROTECTED

13 RURAL COMMUNITIES FUNDED

2,507 STUDENTS IMPACTED

11 local PARKS improved



GOCO also funds regional and statewide projects through our conservation excellence grant program and Colorado Parks and Wildlife, which receives half of our funding. Find out more at GOCO.org/CPW.

*GOCO's FY 2020 ran from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

Serving Colorado

Since our inception in 1992:

5,398

projects were funded in all

64 COUNTIES
across the state

1,641
community parks and outdoor recreation areas

TRANSFORMED

69 school playgrounds that serve

26,507 students

EMPLOYED 9,800

INVESTED IN efforts supporting

43

ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES

1.3
BILLION DOLLARS

IN LOTTERY PROCEEDS INVESTED BACK INTO COLORADO

young people through the Colorado Youth Corps Association

RESTORED/RECONSTRUCTED

941 miles of trails

1,064
miles of rivers protected

66,200
ACRES ADDED to the State Parks system

1,251,897
ACRES have been conserved

Conservation & Recreation Impacts



Colorado Parks and Wildlife Fact Sheet (2019)

The outdoor recreation industry delivers an economic contribution of **\$62 billion** to Colorado each year and accounts for **more than 500,000** jobs in the state.



Grants from GOCO and the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) support **11,800 jobs** and **\$507 million in labor income**.

The Trust for Public Land: The economic benefits of Great Outdoors Colorado and the Conservation Trust Fund (2018)

Approximately **92%** of Coloradans **recreate in the outdoors** at least **once every few weeks**.

2019 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

The **most common recreational activity statewide is walking**, followed closely by hiking/backpacking and then picnicking and tent camping.



Colorado attracts **more than 84 million U.S. visitors** and **1 million international visitors** each year, generating **\$1.2 billion** in state and local taxes.



As Coloradans adjusted to the **unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic**, many turned to the outdoors to find **respite and relief**. In June 2020, State Parks recorded a total of **3.2 million visitors** compared to **2.3 million** in June 2019.

The Denver Post, "Outdoor recreation industry sees some rebound from pandemic, but future remains uncertain" (2020)

TO DATE

\$44.5 MILLION AWARDED

11 PROJECTS

130,063 ACRES OF LAND PROTECTED

Protect

As Colorado's population continues to increase, so too does the pressure on our great outdoors. To address these challenges, in 2015 GOCO set out to achieve an ambitious five-year plan with three key pillars guiding our work: Protect. Connect. Inspire. The first of these pillars, the Protect Initiative, focused on conserving more land for people and wildlife.

In the years since, GOCO has invested \$44.5 million in 11 projects that demonstrate large-scale, once-in-a-lifetime land protection opportunities. The projects conserved 130,063 acres of land—from public open spaces and a state park, to agricultural lands and working cattle ranches.

In Costilla County, where 99% of land is privately owned, Western Rivers Conservancy and its partners invested \$2.3 million of GOCO funds in conserving Brownie Hills, pictured here. The more than 17,000-acre property features critical wetlands and wildlife habitat, scenic open space along the Rio Grande River, and new opportunities for recreation. Public access and wildlife habitat protection were also key benefits of Adams County's acquisition of Willow Bay reservoir, completed after two decades of planning with the support of \$3 million in Protect funds, as well as Douglas County's purchase of Sandstone Ranch, a property known for magnificent red rock formations, which leveraged a \$3.5 million GOCO grant. The list of impactful projects goes on.

The Protect Initiative, coupled with the hard work of our grantees and partners, has helped ensure that some of Colorado's unique and beloved landscapes are safeguarded forever.

Connect

Since eight out of 10 Coloradans recreate on trails, increasing connectivity and access is a top priority for the state's local governments and outdoor organizations. Through the Connect Initiative, the second pillar of our 2015 strategic plan, GOCO has helped partners fill gaps in trail networks across the state to provide safer, close-to-home recreation opportunities.

Over the last five years, GOCO has invested more than \$28 million in 27 projects across Colorado that will construct new trails or create plans for future trail projects. In total, these projects leveraged \$52.5 million in local funding and will account for an additional 57.8 miles added to the state's trail systems.

Projects crisscross the state, from the East/West regional trail, Douglas County's 28-mile loop trail connected to the Denver metro area that's been in the works since 1986, to the Palisade Plunge, an iconic, multi-use trail from the top of the Grand Mesa to the valley floor created by Mesa County and partners.

Well-connected trails that are easy to get to and close to home not only improve quality of life from a recreation standpoint but also serve as economic drivers for Colorado communities. We feel privileged to have been a part of so many visionary and impactful projects that will give communities a boost and provide Coloradans with safe, accessible avenues for exploration and adventure.

TO DATE

\$28.4 MILLION AWARDED

27 PROJECTS FUNDED

57.8 MILES OF TRAIL BUILT

\$52.5 MILLION IN LOCAL FUNDING
LEVERAGED

TO DATE

\$29.1 MILLION AWARDED

15 COALITIONS COMPRISED OF 470
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS PARTNERING TO
GET MORE KIDS OUTSIDE

40,000 KIDS IMPACTED

2,140 PROGRAMS OFFERED

1,361 LEADERSHIP TRAINING, INTERNSHIP,
AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES CREATING
PATHWAYS TO CAREERS IN THE OUTDOORS

\$4.125 MILLION IN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
THE COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION, THE
BOETTCHER FOUNDATION, AND DAVITA

Inspire

For five years now, GOCO's partners in Generation Wild communities have made connections between kids and families and the outdoors and formed collaborative coalitions that will move the youth-and-outdoors mission into the future.

GOCO's Inspire Initiative, the cornerstone of our 2015 strategic plan now named Generation Wild, has delivered new places to play and outdoor programs that get kids outside more often. To date, GOCO has invested \$29.1 million in 15 communities where hard-working partnerships, made up of local governments, schools, health-based organizations, and nonprofits, bring projects to life with a community-driven approach.

While each coalition is unique in tackling the barriers that have historically prevented a community's outdoor access, together they are accelerating equitable access to the outdoors across the state and providing a diverse array of meaningful outdoor opportunities for more youth and families to experience.

The Generation Wild movement has impacted the lives of 40,000 kids and their families. The coalitions, driven by more than 400 partner entities, have offered 2,140 outdoor programs for a range of ages and experience levels. Coalitions have also created 1,300 pathway opportunities, which introduce a diversity of young people to the possibilities of future outdoor careers.

Thanks to the passion of the Generation Wild coalitions, Colorado's youth-and-outdoors movement has hit its stride.

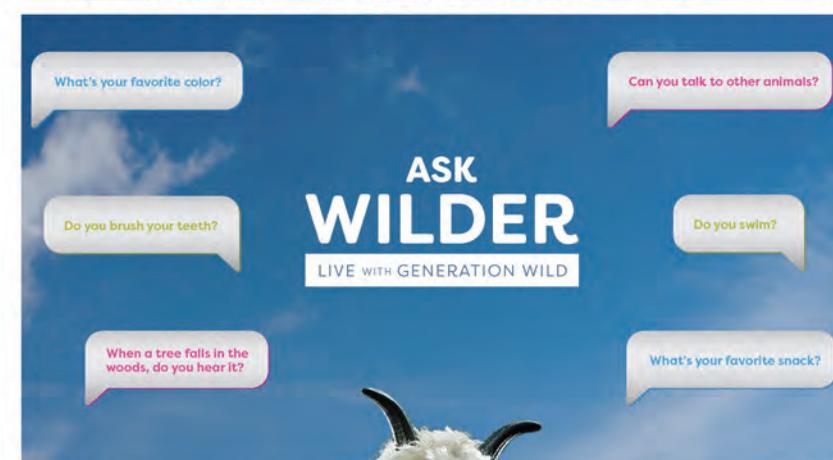
In 2020, Generation Wild reminded Coloradans that “Kids grow better outside” when we really needed to hear it. COVID-19 made us pause. It made us appreciate little opportunities to get outside. To dig in the dirt. To walk around the block. To sit with our faces in the sun. And to reap the health and mental benefits that accompany just being outdoors.

As parents and others who care for children adapted to a new way of life that included social distancing, financial stressors, homeschooling, and work that had them tech-tethered, we focused Generation Wild on doing what it does best: providing tips and inspiration to safely get kids off the couch and out the door.

This summer’s Generation Wild campaign reached 97% of our audience, touching every corner of the state and putting extra emphasis on hard-to-reach communities. The effort utilized targeted television ads along with digital and social channels to spread the message efficiently, while also expanding upon the incredible engagement and love from our audiences that Generation Wild is increasingly known for.

Our popular “100 Things to Do Before You’re 12” list made a comeback, and Generation Wild’s “Stay wild. Stay safe.” campaign merged social distancing with outdoor inspiration. In May of 2020, the last school bells wouldn’t ring, but one sunny Friday afternoon, Coloradans joined us in droves to “Ring in Summer” from their own front stoops. “Always a Way to Be Wild,” summer 2020’s signature campaign, spread the message that adventure can be found anywhere, even at home, and featured real families that stretched their imaginations.

This year, Generation Wild and its statewide network of partners proved once again that Colorado’s youth-and-outdoors movement is an unstoppable force for adventure and growth.



THIS YEAR

\$1.5 MILLION AWARDED

286,047 ACRES OF HABITAT RESTORED,
MITIGATING ISSUES LIKE EROSION, POOR
WATER QUALITY, AND RISK OF FLOODING

22 ACRES OF TREES THINNED TO REDUCE
WILDFIRE RISK

CONSTRUCTED AND CLEARED NEARLY 8 MILES
OF TRAIL

1,589 INVASIVE RUSSIAN OLIVE TREES
REMOVED ON 47 ACRES

MORE THAN 97 MILES OF FENCING REMOVED
OR IMPROVED ALONG BIG GAME WINTER
RANGE AND MIGRATION ROUTES

207 YOUNG ADULTS EMPLOYED AND
MORE THAN 13,500 DIRECT LABOR HOURS
COMMITTED TO STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

Taking Care of Colorado

It's hard being popular. Since 1990, 2.5 million people have moved to Colorado, with another 1.7 million expected by 2040. Coloradans new and old share the responsibility of ensuring that our state's trails, wildlife habitat, open spaces, and waterways endure for generations to come.

Building trails, removing invasive weeds, and thinning trees from over-crowded forests to reduce wildfire risk are all part of taking care of the outdoor spaces we enjoy and our state's wildlife rely on. Through our partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association, GOCO supported such efforts, investing \$500,000 in youth corps programs that employ hundreds of young adults on needed stewardship projects across the state.

Plus, in FY 2020, through an inaugural round of RESTORE grants, we invested \$1 million in 11 projects that focus on restoring Colorado's rivers, streams, wetlands, and critical wildlife habitat. These collaborative, large-scale projects will help ensure our natural resources are protected and well-maintained into the future.



Local Parks

Local parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of youth and families, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of the area.

That's why GOCO invests funds in building and improving parks of all types and sizes—from universally accessible playgrounds and outdoor classrooms to neighborhood parks and county fairgrounds.

Each project makes its community a better place to live and play.

THIS YEAR

\$5.7 MILLION AWARDED ACROSS 19 COUNTIES

10 RURAL COMMUNITIES RECEIVED FUNDING

11 NEW PARKS OR OUTDOOR RECREATION
AREAS CREATED AND 9 OTHERS UPDATED

3 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
CENTERS FUNDED

3 LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS FUNDED

8 MASTER PLANNING PROJECTS IN
THE WORKS

\$10.2 MILLION IN LOCAL FUNDING LEVERAGED



THIS YEAR

\$13.2 MILLION AWARDED

43,219 ACRES OF LAND PROTECTED

\$12.8 MILLION IN LAND VALUE DONATED
BY LANDOWNERS

16 LAND CONSERVATION PROJECTS FUNDED

42.5 MILES OF RIVERS AND STREAMS
PROTECTED

OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAMMING ACCESS
ON 14,165 ACRES IN 6 COUNTIES

MORE THAN 31,000 ACRES OF HABITAT
CONSERVED FOR VARIOUS WILDLIFE SPECIES,
INCLUDING THE WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST
ELK HERD

4 PROJECTS THAT ADVANCE INNOVATIVE
APPROACHES TO LAND CONSERVATION
ACROSS THE STATE

Open Space

Colorado wouldn't be the same without its wide-open spaces. As our state's population continues to grow, Colorado's natural resources, land, and water need protection more than ever.

GOCO funding supports projects that protect natural areas and wildlife habitat, sustain agricultural lands, safeguard the state's water supply, preserve our breathtaking vistas, create recreation opportunities, and help drive local economies.

In FY 2020, GOCO supported land protection work through its Open Space, Conservation Easement Transaction Costs, and Conservation Excellence grant programs, investing more than \$13 million to protect land forever and advance innovative approaches to conservation.

School Yard Initiative

A local school playground can be the closest place to play in a community, but in Colorado, some schools have decades-old playgrounds in need of upgrades to be welcoming, engaging, and safe. That's why schools across the state, in partnership with their local governments, have leveraged GOCO funding to transform outdated playgrounds into captivating play havens that support physical and mental wellness and help students and community members connect to the outdoors.

With grants from GOCO's School Yard Initiative (SYI), kids have led the charge to design their dream play spaces. In FY 2020, many of the SYI projects awarded funding focused on improving access for kids and community members of all physical abilities and connecting the benefits of outdoor time to classroom success.

GOCO-funded elementary schools are eligible to participate in Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Schools and Outdoor Learning Environments program, known as SOLE, which provides teacher training, family nature nights, and outdoor education opportunities for students.



THIS YEAR

\$517,885 AWARDED

5 PLAYGROUNDS FUNDED

2,507 STUDENTS IMPACTED

73% AVERAGE FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH RATE AT FUNDED SCHOOLS

ON AVERAGE, FUNDED SCHOOLS HAD PLAYGROUNDS THAT WERE MORE THAN 2 DECADES OLD

THIS YEAR

\$27.4 MILLION INVESTED

\$9.75 MILLION INVESTED IN THE LAND ACQUISITION FOR FISHERS PEAK STATE PARK

MORE THAN \$10 MILLION COMMITTED FOR CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AT STATE PARKS

4 STATE PARK CAMPGROUNDS ENHANCED OR IMPROVED

OPERATION BUDGETS ACROSS THE STATE PARK SYSTEM SUPPORTED

\$1.8 MILLION INVESTED TO HELP MANAGE, MAINTAIN, AND DEVELOP STATE TRAILS

\$2.3 MILLION INVESTED IN CPW'S ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

State Parks

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) receives half of GOCO's annual funding for outdoor recreation and wildlife projects. Some of the investment provides critical support for the management and operations of Colorado's state parks. In FY 2020, GOCO's investments in the state park system totaled \$27.4 million, which included \$9.75 million toward the acquisition of Crazy French Ranch, home to Fishers Peak near Trinidad in Las Animas County.* CPW now manages the property as Colorado's newest state park: Fishers Peak State Park.

Additionally, GOCO funds support park expansions, operating budgets, capital improvement projects, and other facility needs.

Beyond the state park boundaries, GOCO funds also help CPW carry out its work to support the outdoor recreation needs of Coloradans in every corner of the state.

**GOCO's total investment in Fishers Peak State Park to date is more than \$17.3 million. Fishers Peak is pictured on the report cover.*



Stanton State Park's track-chair program, which is the first of its kind in the Colorado state park system, provides opportunities for visitors with limited mobility to experience the outdoors. The track chairs, which are offered to patrons at no cost, allow safe access to nearly 13 miles of trail, including wildlife watching areas and scenic viewpoints.

Wildlife

GOCO invests half of its funding in Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) each year with \$20.8 million invested in wildlife projects in FY 2020.

This funding supports efforts to protect the state's rivers, plains, and mountains that hundreds of wildlife species call home.

GOCO funds also support wildlife watching opportunities, environmental education and internships programs, habitat management plans, and research projects.



In FY 2020, two CPW projects that reduce human-bear conflicts were awarded grants through GOCO and CPW's Director's Innovation Fund. CPW Area 8 will use an app to track and record bear incidents to help inform long-term management efforts, while Area 10 will develop a program to make bear-proof trash containers more accessible to residents.



THIS YEAR

\$20.8 MILLION INVESTED

10 DIRECTOR'S INNOVATION FUND PROJECTS
SUPPORTED WITH \$150,000

\$2 MILLION INVESTED IN AQUATIC HABITAT
RESTORATION INCLUDING IMPROVEMENTS TO
RECREATIONAL FISHERIES

\$1 MILLION TO SUPPORT FUELS MITIGATION
MANAGEMENT PLAN TO IMPROVE FOREST
RESILIENCE AND REDUCE RISK OF WILDFIRES

FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE PLANNING AND
DESIGN OF A NEW CPW CAMPUS IN
FORT COLLINS

\$4.4 MILLION INVESTED IN PROTECTING,
RESTORING, AND ENHANCING NATIVE
WILDLIFE SPECIES POPULATIONS

\$2.6 MILLION COMMITTED TO DAM
MAINTENANCE AND REHABILITATION
PROJECTS

Finances

GOCO funds are distributed through competitive grant programs for local governments and land trusts and an annual investment proposal from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW).

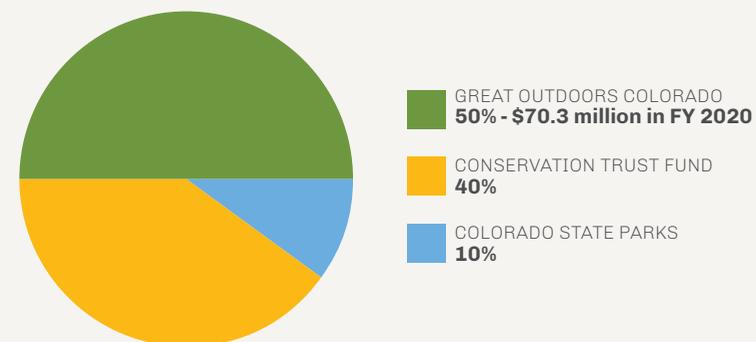
CPW submits an investment proposal to the GOCO board each year detailing how GOCO funds will be disbursed across the agency's facilities and programs. For more information on how GOCO funding impacts CPW, visit [GOCO.org/CPW](https://goco.org/CPW).

The vast majority of GOCO grant funding is distributed on a reimbursement basis, meaning grantees must submit final budgets and documentation of their expenditures before receiving funds. All of our grant opportunities require matching funds.

FY 2020 ran from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. GOCO received \$70.3 million from the Colorado Lottery, making this the nineteenth year in a row the Lottery has met GOCO's constitutionally mandated cap. The cap is adjusted each year for inflation; for FY 2021 it is set at \$71.7 million.

In FY 2020 GOCO awarded \$77.8 million in funding across its grant programs. For our complete FY 2020 financial statements, visit [GOCO.org/finance](https://goco.org/finance).

Lottery Proceeds Distribution



REVENUES | GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO REVENUES ARE PRIMARILY FROM LOTTERY PROCEEDS AND INTEREST INCOME.

REVENUES	FY 2019-2020	AMOUNT TO DATE
Lottery Proceeds	\$70,364,774	\$1,304,539,221
Interest & Other Income	\$4,682,224	\$52,613,642
Total Revenues	\$75,046,998	\$1,357,152,863

EXPENDITURES | GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO EXPENDITURES INCLUDE PAYMENTS TO GRANTEEES AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES. ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES INCLUDE OPERATING COSTS AND BOARD EXPENSES.

EXPENDITURES	FY 2019-2020	AMOUNT TO DATE
Grant Expenditures	\$75,040,053	\$1,218,225,963
Administrative Expenses	\$5,196,139	\$55,356,316
Total Expenditures	\$80,236,192	\$1,273,582,279

BUDGET | FISCAL YEAR 2021 ESTIMATED BUDGET

Lottery Proceeds	\$70,284,464	Grant Expenditures	\$60,000,000
Interest & Other Income	\$650,000	Administrative Expenses	\$5,175,573
Total Revenues	\$70,934,464*	Total Expenditures	\$65,175,573*

*Difference between budget revenues and expenditures reflects monies designated for prior grant obligations.

Pictured: Lory State Park in Larimer County. PHOTO COURTESY OF CPW.

Mission

The Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund was created in 1992 when voters approved Amendment Article XXVII to the Colorado Constitution to allocate Colorado Lottery proceeds. It directs a portion to GOCO for projects that preserve, protect, and enhance the state's wildlife, park, river, trail, and open space heritage, and it created a board of trustees to govern distribution. Read the amendment at [GOCO.org/amendment](https://goco.org/amendment).

The Constitution requires GOCO to allocate funds in a manner that is substantially equal over time to achieve outcomes across four areas:

**OUTDOOR
RECREATION**

**LOCAL
GOVERNMENTS**

WILDLIFE

OPEN SPACE

Governance

GOCO is governed by a 17-member board whose members may serve for two four-year terms. Board members are appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Colorado State Senate. The GOCO board has two members of different political parties from each of the state's seven congressional districts and includes representatives from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Department of Natural Resources. Learn more at [GOCO.org/board](https://goco.org/board).

MEMBERS BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

- 1: Leticia Martinez (U); Hollie Velasquez Horvath (D, chair), both Denver
- 2: Turk Montepare (U), Breckenridge; Mo Siegel (D), Boulder
- 3: David Cockrell (U), Pueblo; Julie Thibodeau (D), Durango
- 4: Pamela Denahy (R), La Junta; Jody Rogers (U), Yuma
- 5: Warren Dean (D); Mina Liebert (U), both Colorado Springs
- 6: Jason Brinkley (R); Linda Strand (D), both Aurora
- 7: Jahi Simbai (U), Wheat Ridge; Karma Giulianelli (D), Golden

STATE AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Natural Resources: Dan Gibbs

Parks and Wildlife Commission: Carrie Besnette Hauser; Charles Garcia

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

In June 2020, the GOCO board officially adopted a new strategic plan. The plan explores a values-based approach to grantmaking—one that positions GOCO as a more flexible, dynamic, and collaborative partner. It was informed by participation and feedback from hundreds of statewide partners and members of the public throughout the planning process. Reflecting the priorities of our partners and needs of our state, the plan sets a vision for GOCO to support community-driven projects that promote community vitality, advance equity, and are once-in-a-generation opportunities with lasting impacts. We look forward to working alongside our partners in the years to come to bring the GOCO mission into a new era. Find the plan at [GOCO.org/plan](https://goco.org/plan).