

# TALKING & WRITING ABOUT GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO

## Short general description

**Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)** invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state's parks, trails, wildlife, rivers, and open spaces. GOCO's independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 5,200 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. For more information, visit [GOCO.org](http://GOCO.org).

Key terms: invests, portion of proceeds, independent board, competitive grants

## Talking points

When speaking about GOCO, emphasize these themes:

- GOCO supports the protection and enhancement of our parks, trails, rivers, wildlife, and open spaces so people can enjoy them now and pass them on to future generations.
- GOCO creates places where kids can safely run, play, and experience nature.
- GOCO enhances Coloradans' quality of life by helping ensure that our neighborhoods have parks, trails, and recreational opportunities; wildlife thrives; and our state's natural beauty endures.
- GOCO helps protect some of the state's most spectacular scenic, historic, natural, and cultural sites.
- GOCO invests a portion of Colorado Lottery revenues and is not tax supported. Lottery revenues also go to the Conservation Trust Fund, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado Department of Education.
- GOCO has funded competitive grants for more than 5,400 projects in all 64 counties in rural and urban areas.

- A Governor-appointed, independent board oversees GOCO and approves the distribution of funds to local governments, nonprofit land trusts, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- GOCO's work benefits the people of Colorado by enhancing the state's economy and by helping improve our health through recreation and protected land and waterways.

## Recommended words & phrases

Use first-person and first-person-plural pronouns “we” and “our” as appropriate.

When discussing Colorado Lottery funding, always note that GOCO receives a portion, not all, of Lottery proceeds. Saying “GOCO receives Lottery revenues” creates the perception that GOCO receives all Lottery funding, which is not true. Say GOCO is “investing” a portion of Lottery proceeds, not “spending” or “using” them.

When discussing GOCO's projects, always note that GOCO has supported projects “in all 64 counties” so people understand that both urban areas and rural communities benefit.

Note that GOCO grants reimburse local governments that control the spending and management of projects. GOCO-funded programs are not managed from GOCO's office.

Emphasize that GOCO's work benefits “future generations.” Coloradans want to know the great outdoors will be here for their children and grandchildren to enjoy as they do now.

When discussing conservation of agricultural lands, say GOCO is helping “working farms and ranches” so people understand these lands are not idle when under a conservation easement. Keeping large ranches from being subdivided is beneficial to wildlife as it means that larger, undisturbed habitat areas are conserved and fewer fences that hinder migration are built.

When discussing parks, trails, open spaces, and rivers, emphasize the uses and list them: biking, hiking, walking, running, rafting, fishing, boating, camping, celebrating, etc. Note that 8 out of 10 Coloradans use trails, and state parks generate billions of dollars in economic activity.

When discussing wildlife, talk about how protecting habitats benefits the wildlife and people, such as those who engage in birding, nature viewing, hunting, and fishing. Avoid jargon like “biodiversity” and “ecosystems.”

Colorado is projected to gain nearly a million more people every decade for the next 30 years. When discussing growth, note the importance of conserving open space between communities, providing enough trails and parks so people can “get away.”

If asked about education funding, note that GOCO helps schools create playgrounds and outdoor education spaces that promote a variety of healthy activities, including sports and gardening. In addition, several school districts have partnered with GOCO’s [Generation Wild coalitions](#) and secured school yard funding in partnership with their local governments. GOCO’s annual budget of ~\$70 million is a small fraction compared to the statewide education budget of [\\$7 billion](#). In addition, a portion of Lottery funds are allocated toward the K-12 capital improvement program within the Colorado Department of Education called BEST.

When discussing Colorado Lottery, note that 45 states have lotteries, many of which rely on their revenue for basic government services, like education, prisons, and senior services. Colorado is unique in not relying on lottery revenues for these types of basic services and for investing such a large proportion of lottery proceeds in long-term conservation and recreation programs.

Words and Terms to Avoid	Words and Terms to Use Instead
Environment	Land, air, and water
Ecosystems	Natural areas
Biodiversity/endangered species	Fish and wildlife
Regulations	Safeguards/protections
Riparian	Land along lakes, rivers, and streams
Aquifer	Groundwater
Watershed	Land around rivers, lakes, and streams
Environmental groups	Conservation groups/organizations protecting land, air, and water
Agricultural land	Working farms and ranches
Urban sprawl	Poorly planned growth/development
Green jobs	Clean energy jobs, jobs protecting water quality, etc.
Ecosystem services	Nature’s benefits
Landscape-scale conservation	Large, connected natural areas

Source: Lori Weigel, Partner, [Public Opinion Strategies](#)



### **Elevator pitch**

Great Outdoors Colorado, or GOCO, receives up to half of Colorado Lottery proceeds. The GOCO Board invests them in outdoor recreation and land conservation projects through a competitive grant process and an annual investment plan with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. GOCO grants help build parks and trails, protect wildlife and open space, invest in our state parks system, and create more equitable access to the outdoors.