



**Comments by Colorado Wildlife Federation, Trout Unlimited and National Wildlife Federation to Colorado Parks and Wildlife: Strategic Planning
April 3, 2015**

The collective intent of Colorado Wildlife Federation (CWF), Trout Unlimited (TU) and National Wildlife Federation (NWF) is to be helpful in developing the content and structure of the new strategic plan. We have supported Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the former Colorado Division of Wildlife, and believe in wise use and conservation of Colorado's wildlife, habitat and natural resources. The importance of strategically addressing the long term future of Colorado's wildlife habitat cannot be overestimated. If we all can agree that the projected growth in Colorado's population by 2040 will have profound impacts upon wildlife habitat, then it is imperative to identify the current situation, issues, and options. Otherwise, various opportunities that currently are available for safeguarding wildlife resources will become foreclosed. What we are positing is that planning for the future of wildlife habitat must be approached with vision and a sense of urgency similar to the development of Colorado's Water Plan.

Part 1. The Role of Strategic Planning

The role of the new CPW strategic plan is to:

- a) Reaffirm or revise the mission and vision of the organization based on the statutory mandate.
- b) Identify and clarify the management principles of CPW.
- c) Identify and clarify the array of options for setting strategic goals in major program areas that will help fulfill the mission and vision and yield financial sustainability.
- d) Select among the options for strategic goals to set priorities.
- e) Generate achievable objectives for each of the prioritized strategic goals.
- f) Formulate metrics for each goal and objective to enable effective monitoring and evaluation of status and progress, and accountability.
- g) Develop strategies, coupled with allocation of resources and budget needed for each that will direct the activities of CPW employees and yield viable public-private partnerships.

The strategic plan also should stimulate a thorough investigation of potential, feasible new revenue sources to gain long term financial sustainability. Active involvement and support by numerous key stakeholders, including CWF, TU and NWF, will be essential in achieving funding stability.

Currently, the statutory mandate and mission of CPW is stated as this:

33-1-101. Legislative declaration. (1) It is the policy of the state of Colorado that the wildlife and their environment are to be protected, preserved, enhanced, and managed for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of the people of this state and its visitors. It is further

declared to be the policy of this state that there shall be provided a comprehensive program designed to offer the greatest possible variety of wildlife-related recreational opportunity to the people of this state and its visitors and that, to carry out such program and policy, there shall be a continuous operation of planning, acquisition, and development of wildlife habitats and facilities for wildlife-related opportunities.

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.”* C.R.S. § 33-9-101 (12)(b).

Recommendation: It is difficult to discern that consumptive activities are part of the mission. CWF, TU and NWF believe it should be modified to read: “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 **wildlife-related and other** outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources.”

Part 2. Key Economic and Financial Considerations and Public Opinion

Below are some of the statistics that are important to factor in during development of the new strategic plan. For example, in the CPW 2015 statewide fact sheet, it is clearly pointed out that fishing has a greater number of licensed participants, use days and economic impact than hunting. In allocating habitat stamp dollars, aquatic habitat should be fully considered, as well as non-aquatic wildlife habitat and access. The plan should recognize the importance of fishing to the residents of Colorado beyond its immediate economic impact. Among other measures to consider is the cost per recreation day produced by the various programs.

Economic Significance of Outdoor Recreation

All outdoor recreation activities. \$34,505,000,000 - 313,000 jobs

Highlighted activities

Fishing¹ = \$1,916,000,000 - 16,413 jobs

Hunting¹ = \$919,000,000 - 10,882 jobs

Wildlife watching¹ = \$2,280,000,000 - 19,541 jobs

. This includes estimates of all direct, indirect and induced contributions.

. This includes a broad set of outdoor recreational activities performed on state, federal, county, local and other lands.

State park recreation² = \$1,032,000,000 - Jobs TBD

State parks visitation³ FY 2013-14 was 11, 948,406

Individual fishing license holders³ as of 2012 was 737,934

Individual hunting license holders³ as of 2012 was 281,201

2014 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Activity Days (by Colorado residents)⁴

Trail recreation- non-motorized: hiking, walking, biking 222,589,592

Boating and water-based recreation excluding fishing 37,328,022

Fishing 26,411,408

Motorized recreation 14,712,057

Wildlife viewing, including bird watching 14,456,827

Tent camping (not backpacking) 14,158,319
RV Camping (and “developed camping”) 6,474,549
Big game hunting 6,091,660
Small game/upland bird hunting 2,964,683

Public Opinion: Colorado College 2015 Conservation in the West Poll⁵:

84 percent of voters cite as of the reasons for living Colorado “the ability to live near, recreate on and enjoy public lands like national parks and forests.”

96 percent said “they have visited public lands managed by the U.S. agencies in the last year.”

82 percent of voters view low levels of water as a serious problem facing Colorado.

¹ Source: Economic contributions of Outdoor Recreation in Colorado, 2014, Southwick Associates for CPW.

² Estimated with visitor expenditure data taken from the 2009 State Parks Market Assessment Study (Corona Research) and a conservative industry economic multiplier. Jobs supported by state parks has not yet been calculated.

³ Source: CPW powerpoint January 2015, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting

⁴ Source: SCORP survey 2013

⁵ Colorado College 2015 State of the Rockies Project Conservation in the West Poll (February 10, 2015). 400 voters in Colorado were surveyed in this bipartisan poll (and an equal number in five other western states).

Part 3. Considerations on the Structure of the Strategic Plan

Relevant planning documents include:

1. 2010-2020 CDOW Strategic Plan
2. The Path Forward
3. The 2014 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
4. Great Outdoors Colorado draft 2015 Strategic Plan
5. Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan

These documents were created with a wide variety of input, and use a somewhat programmatic approach to identifying key issues, strategies and objectives. The 2010 CDOW Strategic Plan contains parts (though without priorities, resource allocations) that remain relevant, and should be modified, as needed, especially to incorporate the State Parks components in a logical manner.

A. Structure of the Strategic Plan

We recommend a slightly different approach to the structure of the strategic plan than the documents referenced above:

- I. Mission
- II. Management Principles
- III. Broad Vision
- IV. Goals and Strategies
 - A. Fish and Wildlife Management Goals that address:
 1. Fish and wildlife population management
 2. Fish and wildlife habitat preservation, enhancement, management
 3. State species of concern
 4. Fish and wildlife recreational objectives
 5. Law enforcement
 6. Resource stewardship, public-private partnerships and private landowner involvement

7. Interagency and other entity cooperation
- B. State Parks Management Goals that address:
 1. Parks habitat and facility management
 2. Parks recreational resources and services
 3. Parks use
 4. Parks appreciation, satisfaction, loyalty
- C. Parks and Wildlife Public Outreach, Recruitment, Retention and Education Goals that address:
 1. Public knowledge, information, generational education
 2. Promotional opportunities and tools to help connect people to the outdoors
 3. Information, marketing and media
 4. Licensing management
- D. Administrative, Personnel, and Logistic Support Goals that address:
 1. Funding and legislative
 2. Personnel management and accountability
 3. Logistic support for facilities, equipment and personnel

Each strategy would have appropriate measurable objectives and tactics that should be measurable and reflect the priorities for the fish, wildlife, and parks operations.

B. Suggested Revised Management Principles:

Management principles are the core beliefs that guide CPW, or any organization for that matter, in fulfilling its mission, creating its management strategies and informing the decision-making processes at all levels of the organization. The following suggested principles reflect, in our view, CPW's most deeply held values and ideals.

C. CPW Management and Administration

1. CPW will manage itself and its fish and wildlife programs, and state parks areas, to be models of effective, efficient, responsible and responsive public service.
2. Natural resource conservation, wise use, and wildlife education and information enhance the public's ability to be wise stewards of Colorado's outdoor resources, exhibit a strong conservation ethic and support sound principles of habitat and land management.
3. Partnerships and the involvement of private property owners, other agencies, local governments, public and private groups, citizens and volunteers are critical to the protection and management of Colorado's outdoor natural resources.
4. Quality customer service is vital to CPW's success.
5. Hunting and fishing license fees, federal excise tax disbursements, and state parks revenues are expected to continue to be the major source of revenue for outdoor recreation programs in Colorado *during the time period of this plan*. CPW recognizes that new and different funding sources are, however, essential if the agency is to fulfill its mission. CPW will allocate funds, consistent with law, based upon priorities established to maximize the ability to fulfill its mission.
6. CPW respects and values its employees and will endeavor to enhance their performance and success in service to the people of Colorado, grounded in a shared vision.

D. Wildlife Conservation and Use Principles

1. Wildlife conservation, use, and enjoyment, including the rich traditions of fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing, are part of Colorado's outdoor heritage, economic future and overall quality of life.

2. A primary consideration in wildlife management decisions is to maintain healthy, diverse and abundant wildlife populations.
3. The quality, quantity and conservation of wildlife habitat are essential to maintaining the state's diverse wildlife populations and wildlife-related recreational and scientific uses.
4. Science-based management decisions are essential to the conservation and management of Colorado's wildlife. Wildlife management decisions will include consideration of impacts to local communities as well as other social and economic concerns.
5. Trails should be located, designed, constructed and managed in a manner that fully considers impacts on wildlife. Every effort should be made to avoid impacts, and if not feasible, to minimize impacts. (See Part 4 E. below).

Part 4. Some Suggested Content in the Strategic Plan

Under the suggested structure described above, it should be possible to identify key programs and activities at the heart of the work performed by CPW that should be described and supported by a strategic plan. The new strategic plan should be more specific than the 2010 CDOW plan. The plan should set measurable priorities, and work force and financial resources allocation.

A. Strategic Approaches to Maintain, Improve Fish and Wildlife Populations and Habitat

GOAL: Fish and wildlife populations in Colorado are managed for optimum sustainability and use that benefits Colorado residents and its visitors while maintaining the viability of those populations.

GOAL: Fish and wildlife habitats in Colorado on state wildlife areas are managed for optimum sustainability and use that benefits Colorado residents and visitors.

GOAL: Fish and wildlife habitat management on federal public lands at a landscape level is shaped and revised drawing upon CPW's expertise and roles as a cooperating agency and partner.

Broad strategies that require metrics and supporting tactics:

1. Fish and wildlife population management strategies include protecting, enhancing, or restoring wildlife populations that have been impacted by habitat modification, introduced species, predation, energy development or other human activities. The State Wildlife Action Plan must be integrated into this plan.
2. Priority is given to the restoration, enhancement and proliferation of native fish populations over non-natives.
3. The Mule Deer Strategy Plan adopted by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in December 2014, should be listed prominently as a strategy in this overarching CPW strategic plan.
4. Fish and wildlife habitat management strategies include conserving, enhancing or restoring key habitats, inextricably linked with fish and wildlife populations. Energy-specific strategies are important for habitats where oil and gas is being planned, developed or reasonably can be foreseen for future development.
5. A strategy should be developed to maximize CPW's essential expertise and roles as a cooperating agency and partner in federal land management planning on BLM and USFS lands.
6. On State Land Board lands a) where access agreements are in place and b) where oil and gas nominations reasonably can be foreseen, strategies should be included at this level rather than relegated to the operational level.
7. Fish and wildlife recreational use strategies should include regulation development and law enforcement.

8. Strategies should be refined or updated to maintain, improve and increase fish and wildlife public recreational access.
By way of example, the public fishing access program developed by Park County can serve as a model for other areas.
9. Resource stewardship and private landowner involvement strategies include developing collaborative approaches and partnerships among agencies and stakeholders that emphasize cooperation and shared effort at regional, state, and local levels.

B. Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Strategic Approaches for Public Outreach and Education

GOAL: Develop and implement effective communication and outreach programs to increase public awareness and encourage partnerships that benefit wildlife populations and habitat on public and private lands.

Note that the Conservation in the West poll found that 96% of voters surveyed in Colorado have visited federal public lands in the last year.

GOAL: Develop strategy to conduct effective outreach to Colorado's Latino's population and gain their participation in outdoor recreation including wildlife-related recreation.

In 2010, Latinos were estimated at 21 percent of Colorado's population and are projected to reach 34 percent by 2040. See also findings in the Latino Voters Report (2015 Conservation in the West Poll).

GOAL: Enhance youth outreach and participation in the outdoors, and in wildlife related recreation.

Also incorporate pertinent strategic elements of the GOCO 2015 Strategic Plan, such as urban youth visits to protected ranches and farms.

A strategy could focus on development of communication and outreach tools and materials that keep partners fully informed, foster mutually beneficial relationships, and expand partnerships.

In the communications and outreach efforts, there are a host of materials and techniques that can be used and provided by the communications and outreach team to market segments. CPW will draw upon partners' expertise and experience, too, in developing products as they are needed and requested. Examples of anticipated products under this strategy are:

- News Releases that will communicate progress and upcoming events with the media to encourage coverage in local and regional media markets.
- Fact Sheets are a versatile communications tools that can be tailored for a variety of media, including the website, press kits, congressional kits, and partner recruitment.
- Press Kits will include press releases, press clippings, fact sheets, and a contact list of CPW experts. An area of the website may also be developed for press materials.
- Brochures, powerpoint presentations and posters on the core elements of CPW will be created or refined. This will be a key element for briefing potential partners and growing awareness and support.

C. A Leading Role in Water Management

In addition to managing its large water portfolio, CPW has an important opportunity to undertake a leading role in water management in our state. By way of example, CPW work includes analyzing appropriate reaches of streams for Colorado Water Conservation Board's important minimum instream flow and natural lakes levels program.

D. Land Management and Stewardship Programs

Protecting, restoring and enhancing habitat on state, federal, and private lands really deserves much more attention than it was given in the 2010 CDOW strategic plan. Given the amount of federal conservation dollars that flow through the acronym programs – CWHPP, NRCS – EQUIP, GRP, WRP, WHIP, along with state GOCO, SWAPs, and the Habitat Stamp programs, the plan will benefit from development of descriptive goals, objectives and prioritized strategies that enable CPW to maximize these opportunities.

One of the land management strategies should address development of management plans for each state wildlife area. Another strategy involves continuing to foster stewardship activities with private landowners and oil and gas operators.

GOCO's strategic plan will become final before the CPW strategic plan. We believe it is important, generally, to align the CPW strategic plan with the GOCO 2015 Strategic Plan. The GOCO 2015 (draft) strategic plan states, "GOCO, our partners and others must make a greater effort to balance increased recreation with the protection of natural resources and wildlife to help reduce the risk of Coloradans losing the rivers, plains, mountains, parks, trails and open spaces that contribute so much to Colorado's beauty, economy, identity and way of life." The GOCO Plan's three goals are: 1. Protect more land and wildlife. 2. Connect people to the outdoors and connect trails, parks and open spaces. 3. Inspire Coloradans to take care of our great outdoors.

References to CPW in the GOCO Plan deserve attention in CPW's plan. In its funding section, the GOCO plan states that the GOCO Board will adopt a five-year spending plan to address its strategic goals and priorities and will assume that "GOCO and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will work together to ensure CPW's investment proposals address mutual strategic priorities and goals in the most meaningful way."

By way of example, specific reference is made to CPW under the Protect goal, as its specified Approaches in A2. include "Work with CPW to identify opportunities for joint programs that protect river corridors and other important wildlife habitat." A major component of the Inspire goal within the GOCO Plan is to create five pilot communities with a programmatic component to "Provide every K-6th grader with opportunities to visit and learn about State Parks and Wildlife Areas...."

E. Consideration of Wildlife in the Colorado Trails Program

According to the SCORP 2013 survey, 83 percent of the public recreates on trails. The demographic projection is that Colorado's population will grow to 7.75 million by 2040. In 2010, the year of the last CDOW strategic plan, the population was estimated at 5 million.

As aptly stated in the GOCO draft 2015 Strategic Plan, "In the coming years, there will be more people in parks and on trails. There likely will be more conflicts over the best uses for land and water for people and wildlife." We also note that Goal 5 in the 2014 SCORP states: "Increase the capacity of land managers to effectively maintain and manage natural resources and recreation infrastructure through a shared understanding and commitment to stewardship."

As trails continue to receive grants through the Colorado Trails Program's motorized and non-motorized grant funds, our concern is about unintended, yet *cumulative* adverse impacts from trails to wildlife habitat. We understand that in an effort to balance trails-based recreation with wildlife needs for well-functioning habitats, CPW has developed a wildlife screening procedure

for early phases of the trail planning processes. We commend and appreciate this tool. Perhaps use of the tool should be required to ensure appropriate location and design of trails that avoid or minimize wildlife impacts. Also, consideration should be given to formation of a stakeholder advisory committee that is representative of the diverse interests to make recommendations that reflect CPW's merged balance between recreational opportunities afforded by trails and the wildlife resources. In addition, a greater emphasis should be placed on enforcement of Off-Highway Vehicles rules and regulations.

We must note that the GOCO Plan, under C1, provides "Build more trails that connect outdoor destinations," coupled with this bullet: "Encourage CPW and other potential partners to increase funding to the State Trails Program and encourage partnerships in large-scale trail initiatives, such as an initiative to fund local trails that provide access to State Parks and Wildlife Areas." We appreciate that C3 then states, "To address public concern about balancing outdoor recreation on public lands with wildlife vitality, fund a guide to recreational development with respect for land and wildlife, similar to the 1998 State Parks' 'Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind' document." As expressed above, we urge wildlife protection to ensure effectively functioning habitats and migration corridors. Effective protection of wildlife must be a reality rather than an aspirational, voluntary guide.

Further, as to state wildlife areas, funded through a variety of sources, managed by the CPW, the intent is to maintain wildlife populations and habitat for a variety of reasons. The "wildlife" should be of highest priority, and development of trails only considered when it is appropriate, and non-damaging to the wildlife or habitat.

F. Example of greater detail when a programmatic area such as "Aquatic Wildlife Population Management" or "Angling Recreation Objectives" is addressed:

In the Aquatic Wildlife Management Program, there are specific groups of activities that support the strategies to preserve, protect, and enhancement of aquatic resources, that, in turn, provide for angling recreation and conservation of threatened and endangered species and species of concern.

These include:

1. Regional fish biologist staff who perform the required field work to provide a scientific basis for population management, angling opportunity recommendations, fishing regulation recommendations, invasive species management, etc.
2. Fishery research activities to assess and recommend new techniques to manage aquatic resources in an era of growing population, climate change and energy development.
3. A fish production section that provides needed fish and non-fish aquatic wildlife for accomplishing management activities, as well as providing fish health services to both state and private fish production facilities.
4. Recommendations for aquatic habitat improvements and overseeing the Fishing is Fun community project funding annual project selection.
5. Cooperation with the federal land management agencies as needed in management activities on federal land.
6. A fully functional staff and funding to perform the work.
7. Cooperation with conservation organizations whose goals and actions are consistent with protecting and enhancing aquatic resources, including ease of access to aquatic data.