Introduction

From the high plains to the Continental Divide, the Front Range contains a mixture of scenic landscapes and prosperous cities. The most populated region within Colorado, the Front Range continues to experience rapid growth across the 7.5 million acres in the region.

The three largest cities, Denver, Boulder, and Ft. Collins, have maintained their western heritage while evolving into outdoor lifestyle epicenters. Denver is the largest city within a 600-mile radius and is recognized as having one of the best urban trail systems in the country. Boulder is a recreationist haven and home to many professional cyclists, runners, and climbers who choose to train at the high altitude. Located between the plains and mountains, Ft. Collins is a larger city that has maintained many small town characteristics.

Bordering the western edge of these metropolitan areas, rolling foothills develop into the Front Range of the Rockies. The close proximity to the Rockies enables Front Range residents convenient access to a multitude of recreation opportunities.

Physiographic Description

The Front Range region encompasses several of the predominant natural terrain types in Colorado, including grasslands and prairies, foothills, and high mountain ranges. Denver and Douglas counties are primarily urban, but stretches of the area's natural grasslands vegetation are still visible in places. Counties in the northern and eastern stretches of this region (Adams, Arapahoe, Larimer, Weld) consist of relatively flat terrain, with some gentle hills and bluffs. These areas are dominated by grasslands vegetation. Shrublands and woodlands occupy small but important ecological niches.

The foothills of the Rockies in Boulder and Jefferson counties are fundamentally grasslands, but the numerous canyons, creeks, and streams in these counties are host to stretches of woodland terrain. Clear Creek and Gilpin counties contain primarily mountainous terrain, reaching elevations over 11,000 feet. These areas are wooded with coniferous forest trees – Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and spruce varieties.

Major Recreation Attractions

National Park Lands: Rocky Mountain National Park

U.S. Forest Service Lands: Roosevelt Forest, Arapaho National Forest, Pike National Forest, Pawnee National Grasslands

State Parks: Lory, Boyd Lake, St. Vrain, Barr Lake, Cherry Creek, Chatfield, Roxborough, Castlewood Canyon, Golden Gate, Eldorado Canyon

State Wildlife Areas: There are 42 SWAs in the region.

14er's: Long's Peak, Mt. Evans, Grays Peak, Torreys Peak

Ski resorts: Eldora Mountain Resort, Berthoud Pass

Scenic and Historic Byways: Cache la Poudre – North Park, Peak to Peak, Trail Ridge Road, Guanella Pass, Mount Evans

Cultural and historic sites: Georgetown Loop Narrow Gauge Railroad, Colorado Railroad Museum, Meeker Home Museum, Argo Gold Mine and Mill

Hot Springs: Eldorado Springs, Indian Springs Resort

Ghost towns: Nevadaville, Apex, Lulu City, Keota

Points of Interest and other recreation options: Six Flags Elitch Gardens, Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Centennial Village, Fort Vasquez, Molly Brown House, Byers-Evans House, Buffalo Bill's Grave, Georgetown Wildlife Viewing Area, Oh My God Road between Idaho Springs and Central City

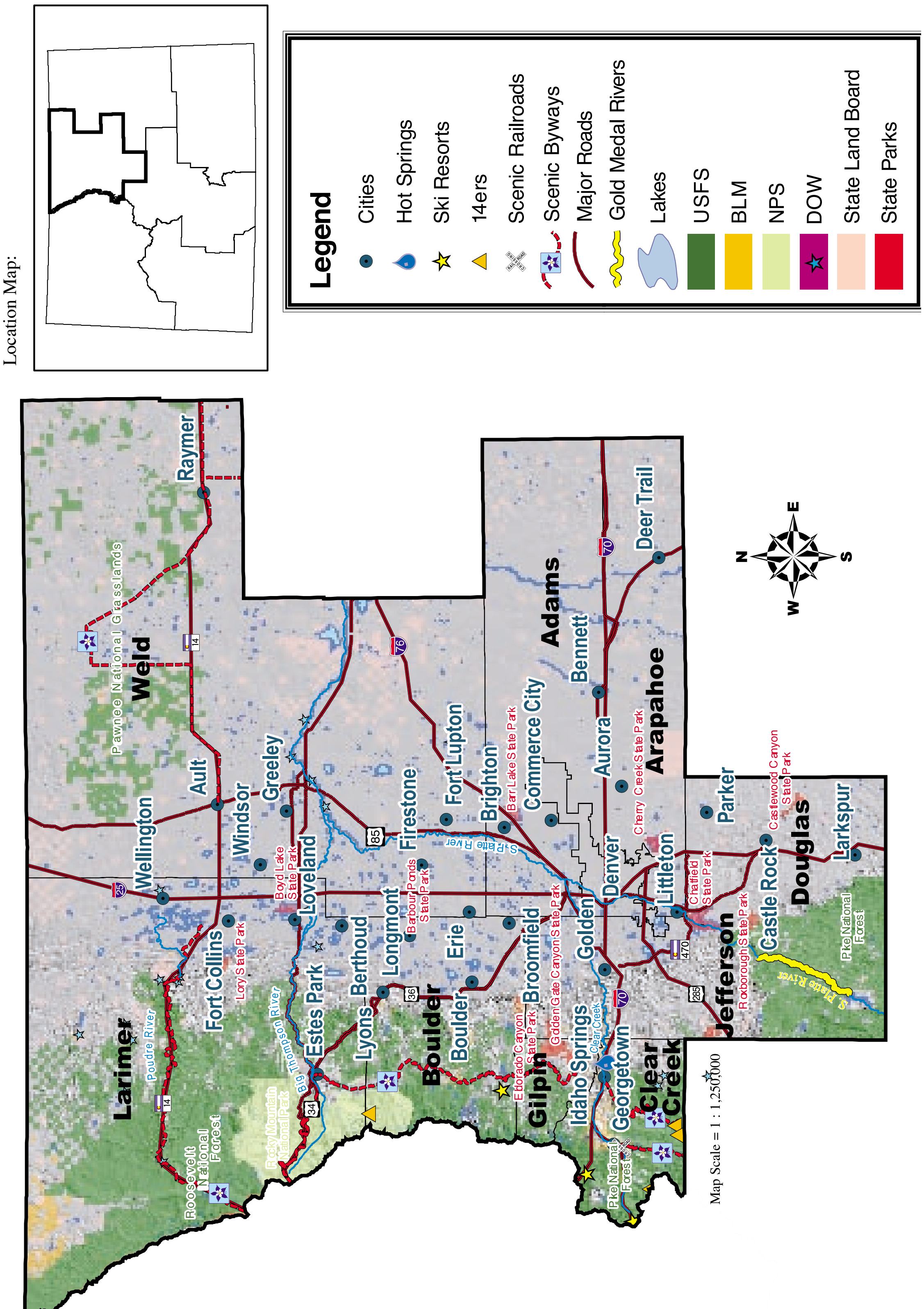
Local Profile

Major Communities

The Front Range region consists of nine counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Clear Creek, Denver, Gilpin, Jefferson, Larimer, and Weld.

Major towns and cities within these counties include Arvada, Aurora, Boulder, Brighton, Broomfield, Castle Rock, Commerce City, Denver, Englewood, Fort Collins, Golden, Greeley, Lakewood, Littleton, Longmont, Northglenn, Thornton, Westminster, and Wheat Ridge.

Map 12: Front Range Recreation Attractions



Source: Colorado State Parks GIS, 2003.

Table 29: Projected Population Estimates and Percent Changes for the Region

County	July - 2002	July - 2005	July - 2010	July - 2015	% Change 2002 - 2015
Adams	369,687	413,165	472,098	533,134	30.7%
Arapahoe	508,689	527,655	559,609	588,271	13.5%
Boulder	278,822	315,519	345,133	375,066	25.7%
Broomfield	41,171	41,747	42,331	42,924	4.1%
Clear Creek	9,561	9,692	10,286	11,255	15.1%
Denver	562,007	579,237	608,621	635,691	11.6%
Douglas	207,970	232,052	281,922	330,420	37.1%
Gilpin	4,856	4,921	5,105	5,295	8.3%
Jefferson	531,825	547,844	574,089	600,875	11.5%
Larimer	263,113	267,369	303,468	341,210	22.9%
Weld	202,427	221,072	261,360	306,197	33.9%
Regional Totals and Percent Changes	**2,980,128**	**3,160,273**	**3,464,022**	**3,770,338**	**21.0%**

Source: DOLA, Demography Section, 2003

Table 30: 2000 Census Data by County

Median Household Income	
Adams	$47,323
Arapahoe	$53,570
Boulder	$55,861
Clear Creek	$50,997
Denver	$39,500
Douglas	$82,929
Gilpin	$51,942
Jefferson	$57,339
Larimer	$48,655
Weld	$42,321
Regional Average	**$53,044**
Colorado Average	**$47,203**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Median Age	
Adams	31.4
Arapahoe	34.5
Boulder	33.4
Clear Creek	40.2
Denver	33.1
Douglas	33.7
Gilpin	38.3
Jefferson	36.8
Larimer	33.2
Weld	30.9
Regional Average	**34.6**
Colorado Average	**34.3**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Persons Below Poverty Level (%)	
Adams	8.90%
Arapahoe	5.80%
Boulder	9.50%
Clear Creek	5.40%
Denver	14.30%
Douglas	2.10%
Gilpin	4.00%
Jefferson	5.20%
Larimer	9.20%
Weld	12.50%
Regional Average	**7.69%**
Colorado Average	**9.30%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

Sub-region Descriptions

To effectively describe the region, the following sub-regions have been created:

Sub-region	Counties
Northern	Larimer, Weld
Denver-Metro	Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Gilpin, Jefferson

Sub-Region: Northern

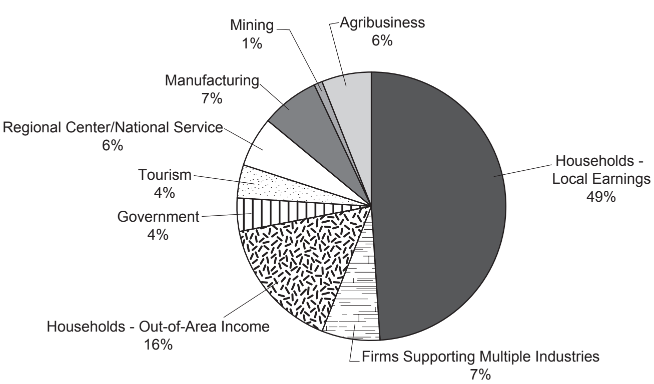
Economic Profile

Overall, the economy of the northern Front Range is very balanced relying on many industries. With the exception of mining and the spending of out-of-area income, employment generated by industries ranges from 4% to 7%. At 4%, tourism provides at least 13,000 jobs in Larimer and Weld Counties.

While income generated by basic industry is very similar to job generation, manufacturing grabs a much larger share of the pie. Eleven percent of area income is attributed to manufacturing, but only 7% of employment. The tourism share shrinks to 2% of area income.

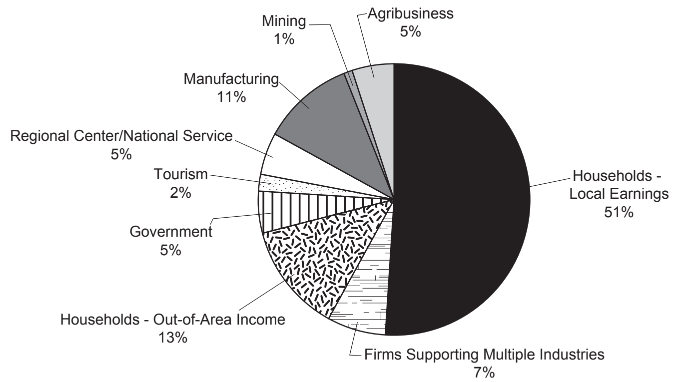
The cost of living in the northern Front Range is very close to the statewide average. Median household income in Weld County is about 90% of the Colorado average, while Larimer County shows such incomes to be 103% of average. These statistics suggest that, on average, Larimer County residents find it slightly easier to make ends meet.

Figure 31: Northern Employment Shares by Major Industry & Household Groups, 2001



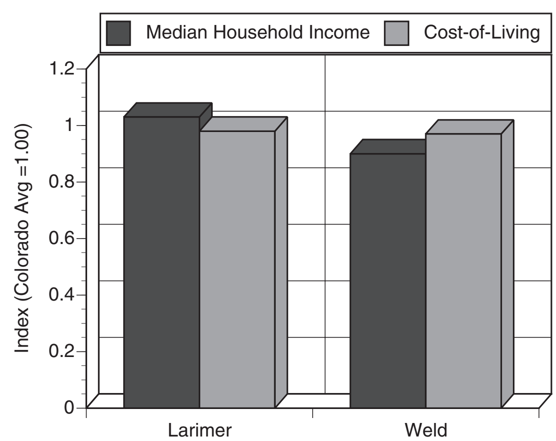
Source: DOLA Demography Section, 2003

Figure 32: Northern Income Shares by Major Industry & Household Groups, 2001



Source: DOLA Demography Section, 2003.

Figure 33: Northern Median Household Income and Cost-of Living Indeces by County, 2001



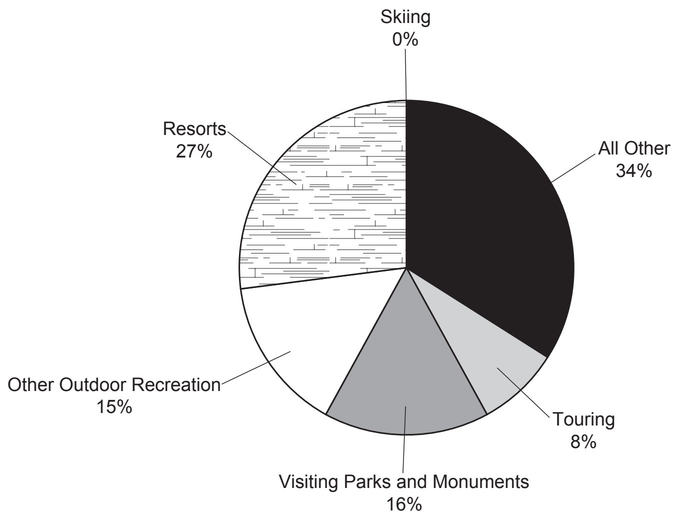
Source: CSU Cooperative Extension, 2002.

Economic Profile of Tourism

Tourism in Larimer and Weld Counties is strongly influenced by Rocky Mountain National Park. Resorts, primarily in the gateway community of Estes Park, account for 27% of tourism-based employment. Combining these resorts with other outdoor recreation categories means that outdoor-based tourism accounts for 66% of all tourism jobs. The remaining tourism jobs in this sub-region are likely attributed to activities in the metropolitan areas of Ft. Collins and Greeley.

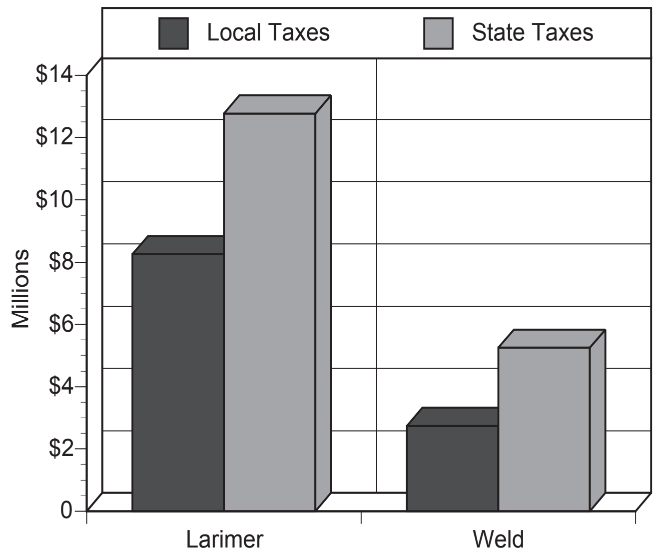
Tax revenues are widely varied among these counties. Larimer County collected about four times more in local tourism-based taxes than Weld County. These amounted to about 10% of total tax receipts in Larimer County and 7% in Weld County.

Figure 34: Northern Employment Shares Generated by Tourism and Travel Categories, 1999



Source: Center for Business & Economic Forecasting, Inc., DOLA, Demography Section, 2001.

Figure 35: Northern State and Local Taxes Generated by Tourism & Travel, 2000



Source: Dean Runyan and Assoc., 2001

Sub-Region: Denver Metro

Economic Profile

The Denver Metro sub-region, including outlying counties such as Boulder, Gilpin, and Clear Creek, leads the state in tourism activities. At 5% of total area employment, tourism runs ahead of agribusiness, manufacturing, and government in job contributions. Over 90,000 jobs in the Metro area are influenced by some form of tourism.

The largest basic industry in the Metro area is predictably its regional/national service center role, providing 16% of all jobs.

Households spending out-of-area income generate another 10% of all jobs.

Incomes in the Denver Metro area are reflective of the main employment generators. Tourism drops to 3%, while regional/national service center income rises to 19%.

Statewide median household incomes are strongly influenced by the Denver Metro area, with most being slightly above the Colorado average. Douglas County reports median incomes that are significantly higher than the state average, while Denver County reports incomes that are 84% of the Colorado average.

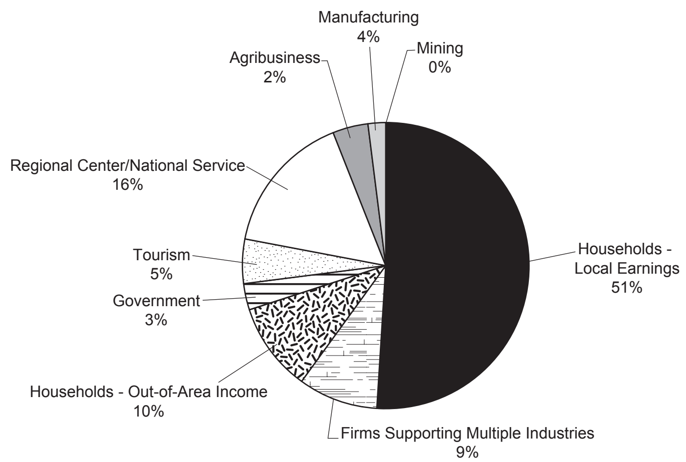
Cost of living does not vary as widely as median household income among Metro area counties. Boulder and Clear Creek Counties have cost-of-living indexes that are 6% above the Colorado average. Interestingly, no county in the Metro area is below the average.

Economic Profile of Tourism

City-based tourism and travel differs substantially from other more rural areas of Colorado. Business meetings, conventions, and trips to take in the cultural aspects of Denver make up large parts of the "all other" category that leads the tourism industry. Nonetheless, visiting parks and monuments, touring, skiing (en route expenditures), and other outdoor recreation generate over 17,000 jobs within the Metro area.

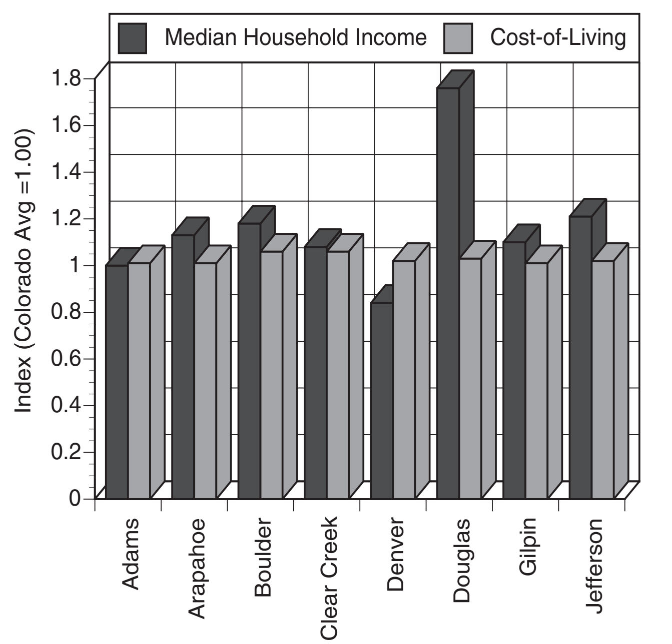
Denver County collected more taxes in 2001 generated from travel and tourism than any other county in the state-almost $60 million. At the other end of the spectrum, Gilpin County collected only $300,000. Arapaho and Boulder Counties rely upon travel and tourism for the greatest share of their total tax revenues–22% and 18%, respectively.

Figure 36: Denver Metro Employment Shares by Major Industry & Household Groups, 2001



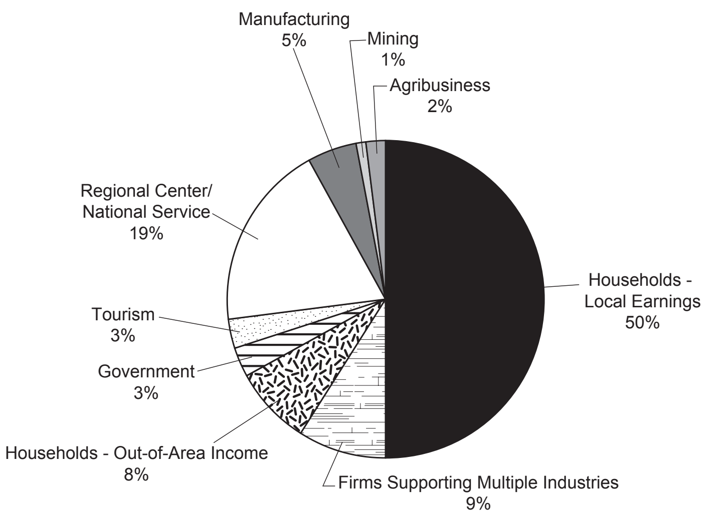
Source: DOLA Demography Section, 2003.

Figure 37: Denver Metro Median Household Income and Cost-of-Living Indices by County, 2001



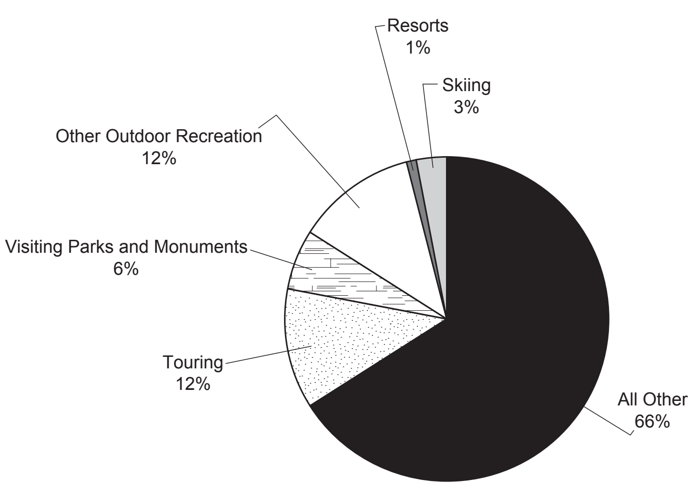
Source: CSU Cooperative Extension, 2002.

Figure 38: Denver Metro Income Shares by Major Industry & Household Groups, 2001



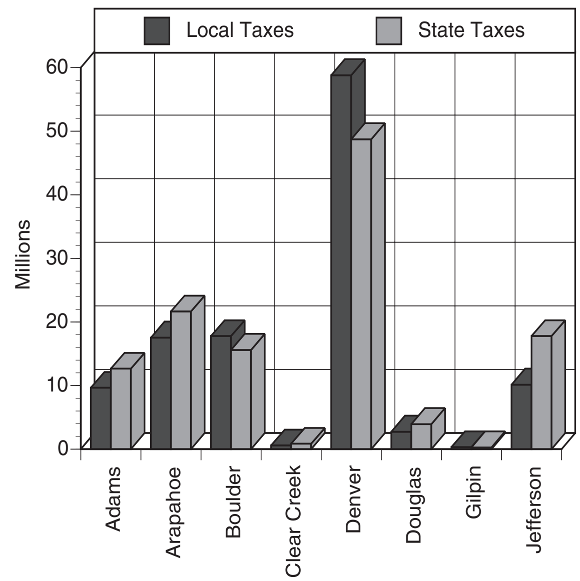
Source: DOLA Demography Section, 2003.

Figure 39: Denver Metro Employment Shares Generated by Tourism and Travel Categories, 1999



Source: Center for Business & Economic Forecasting, Inc., DOLA, Demography Section, 2001

Figure 40: Denver Metro State and Local Taxes Generated by Tourism and Travel, 2000



Source: Dean Runyan and Assoc., 2001

Regional Tourism and Visitor Recreation

Visitor Profiles

Information provided in this section is gathered from the *Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study* completed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in 2002. The following tables depict information on the demographics of survey respondents, preferred outdoor recreation destinations and activities, and increased visitation on the basis of proposed features. While this information was gathered for State Parks, the answers demonstrate user preferences relevant for other recreation managers.

Distinguishing between visitors and local residents helps characterize the similarities and differences in activities, preferences, and needs. Visitors were defined as those that travel more than 50 miles to the area and locals are considered residents living in the region.

Table 31: Demographic Profile of State Parks Visitors

	Front Range Region totals (%)	Local Residents (%)	Tourists (%)
Gender			
Male	51	47	54
Female	49	53	46
Age			
18 to 24	7	8	6
25 to 34	17	21	14
35 to 44	28	28	28
45 to 54	25	24	27
55 to 64	14	12	17
65 and older	9	8	10
Education			
High school or less	16	15	18
Some college	29	26	32
College graduate	34	36	32
Post-graduate	21	24	17
Marital Status			
Single, no children	17	22	12
Single, children	7	8	6
Married/living with partner, no children	13	13	13
Married/living with partner, children	63	57	70
Gross Annual Income			
Under $19,999 per year	7	8	6
$20,000 - $49,999 per year	29	31	27
Over $50,000 per year	64	60	67
Ethnicity			
White	92	92	92
Hispanic	4	4	4
Black	2	2	2
Asian	1	1	1
Other	<1	<1	<1
Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003	*(N=1766)*	*(N=948)*	*(N=818)*

Table 32: Why Locals and Tourists Visit State Parks

Reason for Visiting State Park	Front Range Region totals (%)	Local Residents (%)	Tourists (%)
To unwind/relax	16	14	18
Spend time with family and friends	29	26	32
Spend time on my own/get away from crowds	3	3	3
To stay fit/exercise	6	10	<1
To blow off steam	<1	<1	<1
To be close to nature	7	9	5
View the scenery	6	6	7
To participate in a recreational activity that I love	24	23	25
To do something different	4	5	2
To get away form the usual demands of life	7	5	8
Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003	*(N=1766)*	*(N=948)*	*(N=818)*

Table 33: What People Plan to do During State Park Visit(s)

Activity	Front Range Region totals (%)	Local Residents (%)	Tourists (%)
Hiking/walking for pleasure	60	57	62
Fishing	37	20	57
Hunting	1	1	1
Picnicking	26	22	30
Photography	18	13	24
Dog walking	7	10	24
Looking at visitor center exhibits	13	13	14
Swimming	17	13	22
Motorized boating	14	10	19
Bicycling	11	9	12
Horseback riding	1	1	1
Rock climbing	4	5	2
Non-motorized boating	7	3	11
Naturalist-led programs	4	3	6
Running	3	3	2
Rollerblading	1	2	1
Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003	*(N=1766)*	*(N=948)*	*(N=818)*

Table 33: What People Plan to do During State Park Visit(s) (Cont.)

Activity	Front Range Region totals (%)	Local Residents (%)	Tourists (%)
Nature/wildlife observation	34	29	39
Camping	35	11	62
Dirt bike riding	1	1	2
Off-road vehicle activities	2	<1	2
Spending time with friends and family	<1	<1	<1
Rest/relaxation	1	1	1
Work-related activity	<1	1	<1
Attending special events/activities	1	1	<1
Other	2	2	1
Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003	*(N=1766)*	*(N=948)*	*(N=818)*

Table 34: First Choice Outdoor Recreation Destinations

(State Parks users and non-users)

Preferred Destination	Statewide (%)	Front Range (%)
Wilderness areas with little or no development	29	28
Large parks with a wide range of camping, trails, boating and fishing	27	28
Forests and lakes with limited trails, camping boating and fishing	21	19
Rivers with boating and fishing	16	15
Community trails and community parks with ball fields and recreation centers	8	9
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Table 35: Information Sources Used When Planning Leisure Activities

(State Parks users and non-users)

Information Source	Statewide (%)	Front Range (%)
Recommendation from family/friends	87	87
Newspapers	62	64
Television	43	44
Radio ads	37	36
Internet	40	45
Entertainment magazines	20	20
Billboards	18	18
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Table 36: Outdoor Recreation Activities Participated in During the Last 2 Years

(State Parks users and non-users)

Activity	% of Statewide Respondents	% of Front Range Respondents
Picnicking	82	82
Trail recreation (hiking, biking, etc.)	74	75
Water recreation (swimming, sailing, etc.)	61	64
Tent camping	59	59
Fishing	53	47
Visiting historical sites	62	63
Motorized water recreation	29	28
RV/car camping	37	37
Bird/wildlife watching	52	51
Hunting	20	15
Winter sports (skiing, snowboarding, etc.)	36	39
Ball sports (golf, baseball, tennis)	44	47
Motorized trail recreation	31	24
Motorized winter sports	16	14
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Table 37: Participation in Recreational Activities for Exercise

(Average number of times per month)
(State Parks users and non-users)

Activity	Statewide Respondents	Front Range Respondents
Surfing the Internet	11.3	12.2
Working in the garden	8.7	7.9
Go to the gym/ indoor fitness activities	5.6	6.0
Outdoor leisure activities like camping, fishing, hunting	2.8	2.4
Go for dinner	5.3	5.5
Off-road driving	1.9	1.2
Go to shopping mall	2.6	2.9
Play team sports	1.5	1.4
Go to bar/night club	1.1	1.2
Go to movies	1.3	1.4
Casino, racetrack or other gaming venture	0.4	0.4
Go to museum/art gallery	0.9	1.0
Go to concert or live theater	0.7	0.8
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Table 38: Motivations for Choosing Out-of-home Leisure Activities
(State Parks users and non-users)

Motivation	% of Statewide Respondents	% of Front Range Respondents
Unwind/Escape (average)	**82**	**81**
Give my mind a rest	82	81
Release tensions and anxieties	83	83
Get away from demands of life	86	86
To relax	92	92
Experience peace and calm	89	89
Get away from crowds	83	83
Be alone	54	51
To be close to nature	85	84
Self-fulfillment (average)	**70**	**68**
Learn about new things	74	73
Develop my skills and abilities	56	54
To exercise and keep fit	72	71
Experience new and different things	77	75
Thrill-seeking (average)	**51**	**48**
To take risks	32	30
To experience thrills and excitement	48	44
To experience new challenges	58	57
Be my own boss	64	60
Socialize (average)	**68**	**67**
To spend time with my family	88	87
Be with friends	79	79
To meet new people	38	35
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Table 39: Increased Visitation to State Parks on the Basis of Proposed Features
(State Parks users and non-users)

Feature	% of Statewide Respondents	% of Front Range Respondents
Smaller crowds	83	84
More backcountry parks with minimal development	70	68
Better quality facilities	70	72
More trail opportunities	67	70
Greater range of recreational options	60	61
More education programs	57	56
More advertising	55	57
Theme parks	35	34
Lodges/conference centers	34	34
Golf courses	19	20
	(N=1613)	*(N=1044)*

Source: Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2003

Grant Allocations

The following table is a summary of total grant allocations since each grant program's inception. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants are awarded by Colorado State Parks with authority from the National Park Service. Both Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) and Recreation Trails Grants (Trails) are administered by Colorado State Parks. Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) grants are a portion of lottery proceeds automatically distributed to local governments on the basis of population.

Table 40: Grant Information by County

County	GOCO grant total value	LWCF grants total value	OHV grants total value	Trails grants total value	CTF grants total value	County total
Adams	6,875,029	2,609,134	0	603,500	39,929,973	50,017,636
Arapahoe	3,933,585	3,643,122	0	635,000	57,615,905	65,827,612
Boulder	7,928,972	3,092,295	259,856	186,934	33,142,680	44,610,737
Clear Creek	570,950	103,067	0	220,250	1,117,478	2,011,745
Denver	20,420,099	3,888,494	0	0	68,368,708	92,677,301
Gilpin	182,645	877,657	0	0	479,407	1,539,709
Jefferson	21,041,734	4,154,954	421,900	599,591	63,310,492	89,528,671
Larimer	20,508,028	5,907,077	67,400	164,000	27,816,051	54,462,556
Weld	2,244,101	689,002	142,630	833,600	20,175,425	24,084,758
Region Total	**$83,705,143**	**$24,964,802**	**$891,786**	**$3,242,875**	**$311,956,119**	**$424,760,725**

Source: Colorado State Parks, 2003.

Local Government Survey Results

The following table is the summary for all local governments responding to the survey within the region. There were 93 respondents in this region, the majority of which are jurisdictions with larger populations that provide substantial recreation services to the public.

Table 41: Land and Facilities by SCORP Region

Percent of Colorado's population within region (2002) = 66.2%

Recreation Facility	Front Range	Statewide	Percent of Colorado's Recreation Facilities within Region
Public parks	1,785	2,592	68.9%
Acreage public parks	71,149	99,299	71.7%
Open space areas	881	1,853	47.5%
Acreage open space (fee title)	150,536	183,272	82.1%
Acreage open space (easements)	69,031	92,789	74.4%
Golf courses managed by your agency	50	75	66.7%
Acreage golf courses	7,915	11,090	71.4%
Baseball/softball fields	1,057	1,467	72.1%
Basketball courts	364	656	55.5%

Source: Colorado State Parks Local Government Survey, 2003.

Table 41: Land and Facilities by SCORP Region (Cont.)

Percent of Colorado's population within region (2002) = 66.2%

Recreation Facility	Front Range	Statewide	Percent of Colorado's Recreation Facilities within Region
Multi-use courts or gyms	136	193	70.5%
Picnic shelters	713	1,232	57.9%
Playgrounds	1,018	1,528	66.6%
Soccer fields	842	1,081	77.9%
Swimming pools	113	176	64.2%
Tennis courts	574	882	65.1%
Campsites	940	1,093	86.0%
Miles of multiple use paved trails	1,137	1,507	75.4%
Miles of multiple use gravel or soft surface trails	602	1,231	48.9%
Miles of pedestrian only (hiking) trails	88	269	32.7%

Source: Colorado State Parks Local Government Survey, 2003.

Table 42: Agency Characteristics by SCORP Region

Characteristic	Summary of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Agencies with a plan for outdoor recreation sites, facilities and services	68	73%
Of the agencies with a plan, those recreations plans subject to public review and comment	69	74%
Of the agencies with a plan, those that have the outdoor recreation plan formally adopted by their overseeing government (e.g., city council, county commissioners, board of directors, etc.)	63	68%
Outdoor recreation plans that include a trails component	65	70%
Outdoor recreation plans that address natural resource management and protection (such as erosion control, noxious weed management, habitat protection, etc.)	51	55%
Agencies offering Interpretive or Outdoor Education programs	24	26%
Number of people attending interpretive or Outdoor Education programs annually	98,276	NA
Agencies using volunteers to provide visitor services	23	25%
Agencies using volunteers for maintenance or construction work	45	48%
Estimated annual volunteer hours	113,824	NA

Table 42: Agency Characteristics by SCORP Region (Cont.)

Characteristic	Summary of Responses	Percent of Respondents
Agencies utilizing youth conservation corps crews for maintenance or construction work	17	18%
Estimated total number of annual crew weeks	32,169	NA
Agencies with dedicated funding sources (such as bonds or special purpose taxes) aside from lottery dollars, specifically for park, open space and trail investments	49	53%
Estimated total dollar value of capital improvements (such as land, facilities, trails) planned by agencies in the region for the five year period of 2003-08	$621,599,077	NA
Estimated dollar amount that can be funded by existing resources for proposed five year capital improvements	$408,576,207	NA

Source: Colorado State Parks Local Government Survey, 2003.

Table 43: Ranked Priority Issues for Local Governments

Issue	Front Range	State Rank
Need for visitor safety and protection	1	3
Year to year stability of your agency's budget	2	2
Insufficient resources to fund your agency's budget	3	1
Access for people with disabilities	4	5
Monitor natural resource conditions (e.g. vegetation, weeds, water quality)	5	6
Liability protection for your agency	6	4
Completing community trail systems	7	11
Capacity to serve growing population	8	8
Vandalism	9	9
Offer recreation programs for youth	10	7
Need to create a dedicated funding source for acquisitions and facilities	11	12
Provide public information about facilities and programs	12	10
Creating or updating your agency's parks and recreation plan	13	14
Assess visitor satisfaction and expectations	14	17
Graffiti control	15	16

Table 44: Ranked Priority Needs for Local Governments

Need	Front Range	Statewide
Community trail system	1	1
Picnicking	2	2
Playgrounds	3	3
Acquisition of natural open space	4	7
Acquisition of parklands	5	9
Acquisition of trail corridors and rights of way	6	4
Trails connecting to public lands	7	5
Baseball and football fields	8	8
Soccer fields	9	10
Trails connecting to adjacent communities	10	6
Acquire water for recreation	11	11
Dog off leash areas/dog parks	12	15
Nature study/wildlife watching sites	13	14
Skateboard parks	14	12
Tennis/basketball/volleyball courts	15	13

Source: Colorado State Parks Local Government Survey, 2003.