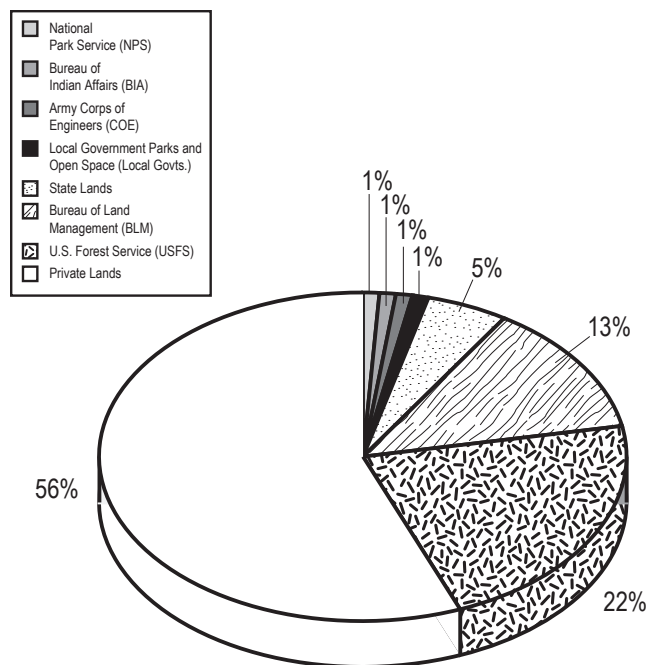


## CHAPTER 4: COLORADO'S RECREATION PROVIDERS

Colorado's public recreation resources are managed by a number of federal, state, local agencies and private entities; major recreation managers are included in this discussion.

Over 24,600,000 acres in Colorado are managed by various federal agencies, primarily the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). Much of this huge federal land base is critical to recreationists in the state. These are lands used for hiking, camping, skiing, off-highway/four-wheel drive use, hunting, fishing, wilderness use and a variety of other recreation pursuits. A number of developed recreation sites are open to the public, however, much of the federally managed recreation use occurs in backcountry areas, and is frequently referred to as "dispersed recreation."

*Figure 101: Land Status in Colorado*



The largest federal land managers in Colorado, the USFS and the BLM, are devoting increased attention to recreation in backcountry areas as well as at developed recreation sites. This reflects both changing attitudes within these federal agencies and increasing use and pressures on backcountry areas for dispersed recreation. The NPS has long been recognized as a leader in providing recreation opportunities to the public. Many

federal agencies including, the BOR and the COE have recently re-evaluated their role as recreation providers in light of changing public expectations. Reservoirs constructed by the two agencies have provided vast amounts of recreation opportunities, but traditionally these agencies have opted to have recreation agencies such as Colorado State Parks or concessionaires manage recreation at the reservoirs.

While federal agencies manage the majority of land available for recreation, much of the actual use occurs in areas managed by state and local entities. State land managers collectively manage over 3.3 million acres of public lands. Key state recreation management agencies have historically been the Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (Colorado State Parks) and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW). Colorado State Parks manages a system of 40 parks which protects over 200,000 acres of land and water, and fulfills a lead role in providing outdoor recreation in Colorado through a variety of statewide programs.

The DOW has a long history of managing wildlife-based recreation in Colorado. Through easements and leases, the DOW protects habitat on a total of 248,000 acres, according to the agency's annual report for 2002. While DOW has traditionally focused on providing opportunities for hunting and fishing, the agency has recently created more opportunities for non-consumptive wildlife recreation, particularly wildlife watching. Over the last decade, the State Land Board (SLB) has been recognized as a major contributor to recreation as the second largest land owner in Colorado behind the federal government.

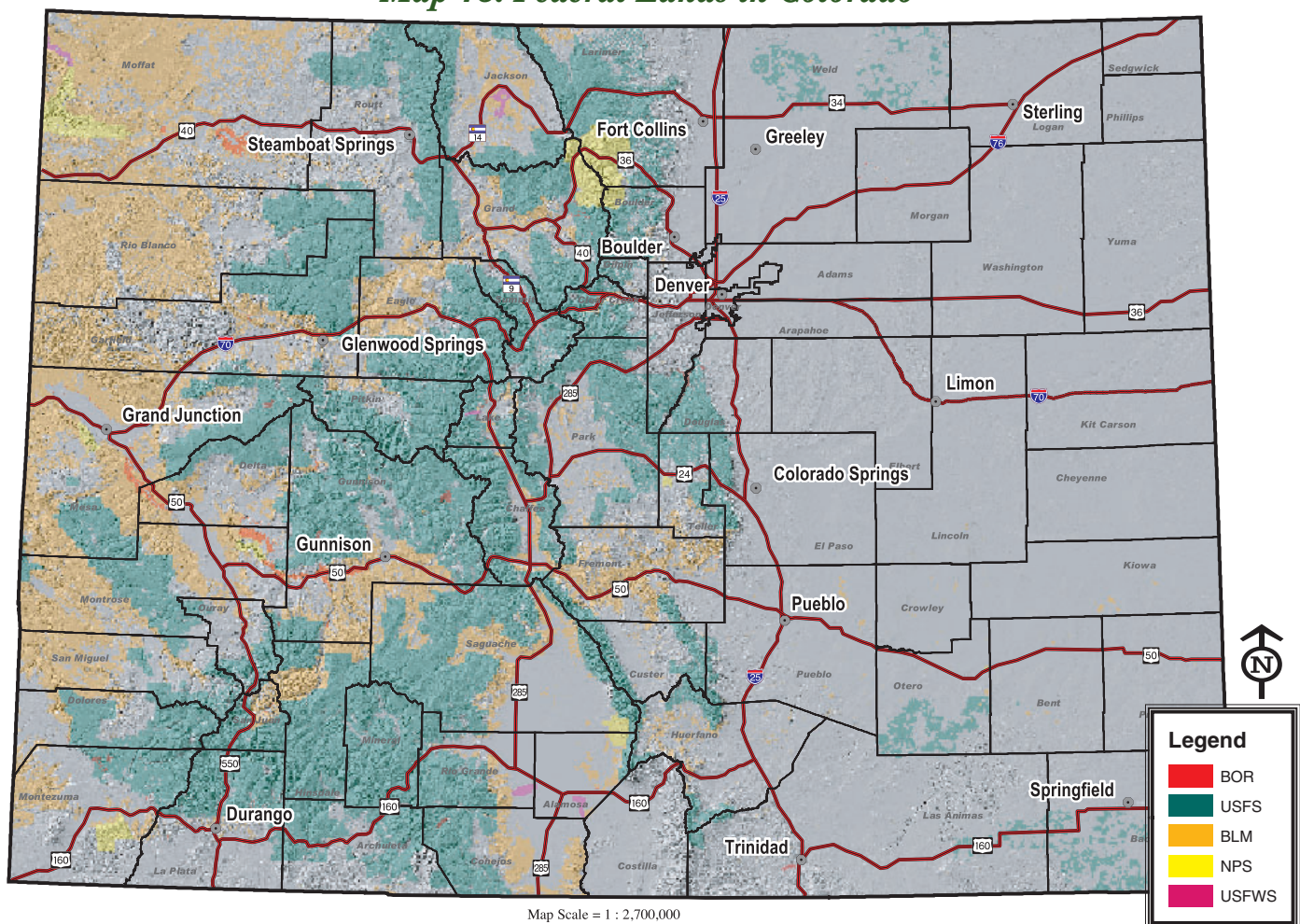
Nearly 400 municipalities, counties, and special districts supply recreation for Colorado's citizens and manage approximately 279,000 acres of public lands. These local governments often provide the greatest amount of close-to-home recreation opportunities. Municipal agencies are often on the cutting edge, providing the recreation that their citizens most want and need. Frequently, municipal recreation agencies have leveraged their limited budgets into programs and opportunities that reach many different segments of the community's population. Several of these agencies have helped to merge their stewardship of recreation into new and innovative avenues for economic development within their jurisdictions.

Increasingly in Colorado, private entities are providing recreation opportunities and services, collectively owning over 38,600,000 acres in the state. Industry organizations and non-profit entities acquire and manage large tracts

of open space and are an integral part of the outdoor recreation spectrum in Colorado.

Opportunities for recreation and open space protection are dependent upon funding from a variety of sources, particularly lottery and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). Since its inception in 1994, GOCO has awarded almost \$290 million for 1,700 open space, wildlife and state and local parks projects throughout the state.

*Map 18: Federal Lands in Colorado*



Source: Colorado State Parks GIS Dept., 2002.

## FEDERAL RECREATION PROVIDERS

### *National Park Service (NPS)*



#### Agency Overview

With over 657,000 acres of protected lands in Colorado, and 83 million acres nationwide, the NPS preserves the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the United States and the world.

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the NPS “Organic Act” creating a new federal bureau within the Department of the Interior to protect the national parks and monuments then in existence and those yet to be established. The NPS was created “...to promote and regulate the use of the...national parks... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.” In addition, each unit of the National Park system also has an act or proclamation that established the unit and further defines the purpose and significance of the unit and may provide specific goals or instructions from Congress for the unit’s management.

The NPS still strives to meet the original goals instituted by the Organic Act, while filling other roles, as well: guardian of diverse cultural and recreational resources; environmental advocate; world leader in the parks and preservation community; and pioneer in the drive to protect America’s open space.

The NPS also administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), oversees the SCORP process, and is responsible for the National Historic Landmarks and National Natural Landmarks programs. In cooperation with AMTRAK, NPS provides educational programs on the Southwest Chief and California Zephyr passenger trains during the summer months.

The economic impact of the national park system in Colorado is far-reaching. NPS employs approximately 7,326 people in Colorado and over \$343 million is contributed to Colorado’s economy each year.

Communities in the vicinity of park lands often realize substantial economic benefits from the tourism generated by NPS lands.

#### Recreation Planning

Units of the national park system are managed under General Management Plans, which are updated about every 10 years. The purpose of the General Management Plan is to ensure that the park has a clearly defined direction for resource preservation and visitor use. It is the basic foundation for decision-making.

To address the increasing concern over rising visitation and subsequent impacts to resources and visitor experience, the NPS developed the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) framework. VERP addresses the concept of carrying capacity to sustain the natural and cultural resources within the national park system. Created in 1992, the VERP concept is still being implemented throughout the park system. The process begins with defining each park’s specific purpose and significance. Management zones are created within the park to accomplish desired future conditions and are prescribed based on visitor use, resource condition, level of development, and management activity.

Evaluating the decline or change in visitor experience and resource condition is fundamental and is referred to as ‘limits of acceptable change’ (LAC). Visitor use management at national parks is accomplished through the VERP framework in conjunction with the park’s general management planning (GMP) process.

#### Recreation Opportunities

**Colorado contains 11 National Park Service units with one pending, including:**

##### Three National Parks:

- Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
- Mesa Verde National Park
- Rocky Mountain National Park

##### Six National Monuments and one National Preserve:

- Colorado National Monument
- Dinosaur National Monument
- Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument



- Great Sand Dunes National Monument and Preserve (Great Sand Dunes is authorized to be designated as a national park upon the completion of land acquisition, which is expected to occur in 2004).
- Hovenweep National Monument
- Yucca House National Monument (administered by Mesa Verde)

#### **One National Historic Site and one pending NHS:**

- Bent's Old Fort Historic Site
- Sand Creek National Historic Site (the site has been authorized and will be established upon sufficient land acquisition)

#### **One National Recreation Area:**

- Curecanti National Recreation Area

#### **The National Park Service also provides administrative and technical support to the following affiliated areas:**

#### **Three National Historic Trails:**

- Pony Express National Historic Trail
- Santa Fe National Historic Trail
- Old Spanish Trail

#### **One National Scenic Trail:**

- Continental Divide Trail

#### **One Heritage Area:**

- Cache la Poudre

There are various types of recreation opportunities within the national parks. Of the nearly 658,000 total NPS acres in Colorado, 99,752 acres have been designated wilderness. Recreationists pursue hiking and backpacking on the 551 miles of hiking trails within the state. Over 188 miles of National Historic Trails attract cultural and heritage seekers and scenic drivers. Water enthusiasts enjoy the 10,298 surface acres of Blue Mesa Lake in Curecanti National Recreation Area. Kayakers, rafters, and anglers pursue the 107 miles of river corridor in Bent's Old Fort, Black Canyon, and Dinosaur.

Over 5.7 million visitors pursue activities within Colorado's national parks such as camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, boating, wildlife viewing, birding, cross-country skiing, mountain climbing, bicycling, horseback

riding, jeep touring, and river trips. Interpretive programs and museums offer educational opportunities. Pre-Columbian Indian ruins and paleontology sites are also well-visited.

#### **Volunteerism**

Volunteers perform a multitude of roles in the national park units of Colorado, including visitor services, campground hosts, information and interpretation, and search and rescue. Other hours are also donated towards resource protection and cataloging of museum collections. Over 1670 volunteers performed nearly 83,000 hours of volunteer service at NPS in 2001.

#### **Major Acquisitions**

The NPS continues to acquire land in Colorado. Over 41,680 acres of new land was acquired as the Great Sand Dunes National Preserve in November of 2000. Within the proposed Sand Creek National Historic Site, an additional 12,583 acres has been authorized. In addition to these large areas, smaller parcel purchases or exchanges with other federal agencies have been proposed for Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Colorado National Monument, Curecanti NRA, Dinosaur National Monument, Great Sand Dunes National Monument, and Rocky Mountain National Park.

#### ***United States Forest Service (USFS)***



#### **Agency Overview**

Established in 1905, the USFS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture which manages public lands in national forests and grasslands.

“To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations” is the mission of the USFS. Congress established the USFS to provide quality water and timber for the nation's benefit. Over the years, the public has expanded the role of national forests and grasslands. Congress responded by directing the Forest Service to manage national forests for additional multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation. Multiple use means managing resources under the best combination of uses to benefit the American people while ensuring the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment.

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**The USFS mission is accomplished through five main activities:**

- Protection and management of natural resources on National Forest System lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resource utilization.
- Community assistance and cooperation with state and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-federal forest and associated range and watershed lands to improve conditions in rural areas.
- Achieving and supporting an effective workforce that reflects the full range of diversity of the American people.
- International assistance in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world's forest resources.

Supervised on several levels, the USFS is managed by: Ranger Districts, National Forest or Grassland, Region, and the national level. Colorado is managed under Region 2, the Rocky Mountain Region, with headquarters located in Lakewood, Colorado.

The USFS is involved in numerous partnerships with the Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of State, the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as with nonprofit development organizations, wildlife organizations, universities, and international assistance organizations. The USFS plays a key role in formulating policy and coordinating U.S. support for the protection and sound management of the world's forest resources. One of 10 cooperating agencies of the Rocky Mountain Area (RMA) Predictive Services, the USFS collaborates with Bureau of Indian Affairs, BLM, USFWS, NPS, and the states of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming to provide fire, weather and intelligence support to the Rocky Mountain region.

In an effort to effectively manage wildfire, the USFS, along with several other U.S. Department of the Interior agencies, received an increase in funding to implement the National Fire Plan in 2002. The "National Fire Plan" sets forth goals and objectives to address:

- Agency firefighting capacity
- Restoration of damaged watersheds
- Hazardous fuels reduction
- Economic assistance to communities
- Reduction of fire hazards and restoration of landscapes in communities

### **Recreation Planning**

The vision of the USFS is to "meet the nation's present and future needs for outdoor recreation in a manner that protects the health, diversity, and productivity of the land." To accomplish this, the Forest Service utilizes several planning tools including the Strategic Plan, The Recreation Agenda and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). The Recreation Agenda provides focus for programs and activities to meet the recreation, heritage, and wilderness related goals outlined in the Strategic Plan. Projects are prioritized based on feedback from partners and local communities, in accordance with sustainable land management practices.

Recreation opportunities are planned using the ROS, an element of comprehensive Land and Resource Management Planning. The ROS defines the continuum of combinations of activities, settings, and probable experiences. Six ROS classes have been defined as primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban. The recreation input considers factors such as supply and demand, issues and identification of alternative responses to those issues which the planner must assess in order to develop management area prescriptions designed to assure appropriate recreation experience through setting and activity management. By managing the natural resource settings, and the activities occurring within it, the resources manager is providing the opportunities for recreation experiences to take place.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

National forests are America's great outdoors providing opportunities for recreation in open spaces and natural environments. The recreational use of forests and grasslands has been increasing for decades, and is expected to continue to increase. Over 11,000 miles of trails are one way to access the 35 Wilderness Areas, two National Grasslands, and

one National Recreation Area in Colorado. Six additional congressionally designated areas also provide a multitude of recreation opportunities. The USFS also built and maintains the Continental Divide Trail, a National Scenic Trail, in cooperation with the Continental Divide Trail Alliance.

People enjoy a wide variety of activities on the 14.4 million acres of national forests in Colorado, including: backpacking in remote wilderness areas, mastering an all-terrain vehicle over a challenging trail, enjoying the views along a scenic byway, or fishing in a great trout stream. Approximately 4.3 million acres of Wilderness Areas allow non-motorized recreation in areas where the human footprint is considerably less obvious. Over 731 miles of groomed cross-country trails supply opportunities for snowshoers and crosscountry skiers. Others enjoy camping in developed sites and primitive areas, viewing wildlife, hiking, biking, kayaking, or hiking.

## Volunteerism

The USFS makes extensive use of volunteers in a variety of capacities – volunteers contributed over 123,000 hours (with a dollar value of more than \$1.5 million) to USFS projects in Colorado in 2002. Senior volunteers are especially prevalent in the USFS, in part because of the Senior Community Service Employment Program. The average age of USFS volunteers in Colorado is 68.

## Bureau of Land Management (BLM)



### Agency Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, administers 261 million acres of America's public lands, located primarily in 12 western States. The BLM manages over 8.3 million acres in Colorado providing recreation opportunities for nearly 5 million annual visitors. The agency's vision is 'to enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.'

Established in 1946 by merging the U.S. Grazing Service and the General Land Office within the Department of the Interior, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) now mandates that these lands remain in public ownership, using the land "for some or all of these resources or related services" and using other land "for less than all the resources," all in "combination of balanced and diverse resource uses that takes into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources...."

Left over from the vast public domain out of which western states were carved, these lands were, in the words of National Geographic, "...too parched for row crops, too steep, or otherwise undesirable" for homesteads, towns, and other land grants. Unlike most federal lands, public lands derive their character from adjoining private lands, communities, and cultures with which they are intertwined. Most BLM lands are still managed in the spirit of the western frontier, and are increasingly valued for the distinctive frontier experiences and lifestyles it engenders.

Colorado has BLM personnel in offices at 17 different communities plus a state office in Lakewood. One office involves a National Monument, one National Conservation Area or National Monument. One office is shared with Colorado State Parks and seven are shared with the USFS to improve service and increase administrative efficiency.

## Recreation Planning

Based on the recreation mission statement and accompanying goals in the U.S. Department of the Interior's Strategic Plan and *BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Priorities*, the BLM manages recreation differentially by type of area.

According to BLM's 2000-2005 Strategic Plan, "Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) are established to direct recreation funding and personnel to lands where a commitment has been made to provide a specific recreation activity or experience and public benefit opportunities. This includes a long-term commitment to managing the physical, social, and managerial settings to sustain these activities, experiences, and benefit opportunities."

Intensive recreation occurs in areas having distinctive, highly visible, or otherwise outstanding resources attractions that are managed to provide structured recreation opportunities in response to demonstrated national or regional recreation-tourism demand. Major investments in facilities and visitor assistance are authorized in these areas. These high visibility areas serve national and regional recreation-tourism markets. Here the emphasis is on meeting demand for specific structured recreation opportunities provided through these superlative natural and cultural settings.

Community-oriented SRMAs are managed to provide structured recreation opportunities in response to recreation-tourism demand generated by community

and/or tourism growth and development. Local community-based markets served by these areas focus national or regional demand on adjoining public lands through area resort, second home, or other recreation related developments. Here the emphasis is on responding to those demands for open-space recreation opportunities and stabilization of recreation-tourism industry and area economies through product development and promotion.

Distinctive open space frontier is managed to support BLM's traditional role as a provider of dispersed recreation, maintaining the land's undeveloped, open character. Here efforts are taken to exercise minimal regulatory constraints so as to preserve the visitor freedom to choose where to go and what to do. Such areas are managed as Extensive Recreation Management Areas (ERMAs), with management being limited to custodial actions only (Source: Section .06, 8300 Policy Manual). Increasing recreational use and development of ERMAs is introducing a new reality. If these recreation opportunities are to be sustained, some of these areas will require more intensive recreation management and marketing that goes beyond simple custodial recreation management to maintain their distinctive settings and productive capacity.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Among the BLM's Colorado recreation attractions are more than 20 Special Recreation Management Areas. These include Canyon of the Ancients National Monument and two National Conservation Areas: Colorado Canyons and Gunnison Gorge. In addition, the BLM manages four Wilderness Areas totaling 139,000 acres: American Flats, Black Ridge, Gunnison Gorge, and Powderhorn.

BLM lands provide a variety of recreation opportunities including: whitewater rafting, auto touring, mountain bike riding, viewing wildlife, historic, archaeology, and fossil sites, rock climbing, hiking and camping, and hunting and fishing. Over 1,500 miles of trail provide opportunities for All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) riding, snowmobiling, hiking, backpacking, and dirt bike riding.

The BLM manages numerous whitewater rafting recreation areas including: Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA), Yampa River, Upper Colorado River, Dolores River, and Lake Fork of the Gunnison River. The AHRA is a landmark cooperative

effort of the BLM and Colorado State Parks. Through this partnership, the agencies provide visitors with outstanding recreation opportunities and care for the nationally significant natural resources of the Arkansas Valley.

### **Volunteerism**

In Colorado every year, nearly 2,000 volunteers contribute more than 100,000 hours of time valued at over \$1.5 million. BLM relies heavily on volunteers to assist with a variety of projects including habitat improvement, maintaining interpretive sites, and restoring wildlife habitats.

### ***United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)***



### **Agency Overview**

The USFWS mission is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continued benefit of the American people. The USFWS helps to protect a healthy environment for people, fish, and wildlife, and helps Americans conserve and enjoy the outdoors. Part of the Department of the Interior, the USFWS is responsible for carrying out federal laws and programs that conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats. The USFWS' major responsibilities are for migratory birds, endangered species, some marine mammals, and freshwater and anadromous fish.

The USFWS began in 1871, when Congress established the U.S. Fish Commission to study the decrease of the nation's food fishes and recommend ways to reverse the decline. In 1885, Congress created an Office of Economic Ornithology in the Department of Agriculture to study food habits and migratory patterns of birds, particularly those that had an effect on agriculture. This office's responsibilities grew and underwent several name changes until becoming the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1905. The Bureau of Fisheries and the Biological Survey were transferred to the Department of the Interior in 1939 and in 1940, they were combined and renamed the Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1956, Congress passed the Fish and Wildlife Act, creating the United States Fish and Wildlife Service that we know today.

The USFWS manages the National Wildlife Refuge System and operates National Fish Hatcheries. The USFWS also administers the Federal Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Programs, which distributes excise tax revenues from sales of hunting and fishing equipment and motorboat fuels to States for fish and wildlife restoration. In 1995, Colorado received



\$4.9 million for sport fish restoration and \$5.2 million for wildlife restoration and hunter education from the USFWS' Federal Aid program.

Working with numerous other land management agencies in Colorado, the USFWS manages the state's Endangered Species Recovery Program. Another statewide collaborative effort, The Colorado Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program began in 1988. The Colorado Division of Wildlife, The Colorado Wetlands Initiative, Great Outdoors Colorado, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, local Water and Soil Conservation Districts, USFWS, and over 700 landowners have combined to restore and protect wetland, upland, and riparian habitat in Colorado.

Colorado is managed as part of Region 6, the Mountain-Prairie Region. The USFWS employs 124 people in the state at six National Wildlife refuges, two National Fish Hatcheries, two Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Offices, and one Colorado River Fishery Project Office. The 2000 fiscal year budget for Service activities in Colorado totaled \$7,336,000.

### **Recreation Planning**

The USFWS's recreation management strategy is to provide recreation opportunities, monitor the resulting impacts to wildlife where possible, and to err on the side of wildlife protection. The Division of Refuge Planning is organized within the Refuges and Wildlife program of the USFWS. The Division of Refuge Planning performs all planning functions for the Mountain-Prairie region of the USFWS.

Recreation planning is guided by each wildlife refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). Each Refuge's CCP steers management decisions, sets forth strategies for achieving Refuge purposes, and contributes to the System mission. Throughout the wildlife refuges Outdoor Recreation Planners or Refuge Operations Specialists plan, implement, and evaluate the public use program proposed in the CCP.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

Colorado contains over 79,000 acres of USFWS protected lands with the recreation emphasis on wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing. Over 43,500 people visited Colorado's USFWS fisheries facilities in 1999 and 63,500 people visited National Wildlife Refuges in 1999.

### **Colorado contains six National Wildlife Refuges:**

- Rocky Mountain Arsenal is located just 10 miles from downtown Denver and home to more than 300 species of wildlife including birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and wintering bald eagles.
- Alamosa and Monte Vista NWRs provide migratory habitat for waterfowl, greater sandhill cranes, and whooping cranes in the San Luis Valley. The Refuges are recognized for providing some of the most productive nesting habitat for ducks on the North American Continent.
- Arapahoe NWR manages a diverse wildlife population ranging from moose to an abundance of migratory birds. Birders come from all over to add sage grouse and rosy finches to their bird lists at Arapahoe.
- Browns Park NWR, located on both sides of the Green River in extreme northwest Colorado, provides excellent habitat for migratory waterfowl. The Refuge also provides protection and restoration of riparian habitat for songbirds.
- Two Ponds NWR, located in Arvada, was established in 1992 and provides opportunities for environmental education and wildlife observation in an urban setting.

### **Volunteerism**

Over 25,500 hours were donated by 363 volunteers to help with Service projects in Colorado. Working side-by-side with Service employees, volunteers help protect, conserve and restore fish, wildlife, plants and habitat. Specifically, volunteers are utilized for conducting fish and wildlife population surveys, leading interpretive tours, bird banding, and performing clerical and administrative duties. Some work full time while others contribute a few hours per week or month or during a particular season or special event. At some areas, volunteers are provided housing or trailer and RV pads in return for a set amount of volunteer hours.

### ***United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE)***



In 1775, the Continental Congress authorized the first Chief Engineer to build fortifications near Boston at Bunker Hill. This was the beginning of the COE which,



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would later develop into an agency of civilian and military personnel who serve as engineers, scientists, and natural resource managers for the Army. The mission of the COE is to provide quality, responsive engineering services to the nation including:

- Planning, designing, building, and operating water resources and other civil works projects including navigation, flood control, environmental protection, and disaster response
- Designing and managing the construction of military facilities for the Army and Air Force
- Providing design and construction management support for other Defense and federal agencies

The COE's natural resource management mission is to manage, conserve, and improve natural resources and the environment while providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences to serve the needs of present and future generations. Since the vast majority of these recreation areas are located next to water, the COE, in partnership with other agencies, is active in the National Water Safety Program.

The COE also manages thousands of square miles as forest and wildlife habitat, monitors water quality at its dams, operates fish hatcheries in cooperation with state wildlife agencies, and in some cases restores the environment at projects built in earlier days. The Section 404 permit program is also managed by the COE, insuring that the physical, biological, and chemical quality of our nation's water is protected from unregulated discharges of dredged or fill material.

The COE is organized geographically into eight divisions in the US and 41 districts. Divisions and districts follow watershed boundaries, of which there are four in Colorado: Omaha, Sacramento, Albuquerque, and Kansas City.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

The COE is the nation's largest provider of outdoor recreation, operating more than 2,500 recreation areas at 463 projects, mostly lakes, and leasing an additional 1,800 sites to state or local park and recreation authorities or private interests.

The following COE lands in Colorado are leased to various agencies:

#### **City of Lakewood**

- Homestead and Fox Hollow Golf Course
- Bear Creek City Park

#### **State of Colorado**

- Chatfield State Park
- Cherry Creek State Park
- John Martin State Park and Wildlife Area
- Trinidad State Park

#### **Denver City and County**

- Kennedy Sports Fields and Kennedy Golf Course
- Chatfield Nature Preserve

#### **Greenwood Village**

- Village Greens Park

#### **City of Aurora**

- Olympic Park

Through a landmark cooperative agreement, The COE and Colorado State Parks have committed to cost-share renovation at three parks along Colorado's Front Range. This leveraging strategy for maximizes the use of state and federal tax dollars. The agreement identifies approximately \$39 million in needed recreation facility renovations and upgrades at Cherry Creek, Chatfield and Trinidad Lake State Parks, costs of which will be shared over about 10 years. Project Cooperation Agreements and renewed 25-year recreation management leases were signed in May 2003. All three parks contain aging and under-designed recreation facilities in need of additions and renovations to meet accessibility standards and keep up with increasing public demand. Additionally, Park visitor expectations are high and facilities at these three parks fall far short of meeting these expectations.

The COE estimates that one in ten Americans visits a COE project at least once a year. With over 15,000 acres of land at three major sites in Colorado, the COE is the steward of lands and waters at Cherry Creek Dam, Chatfield Dam, and Bear Creek Dam.

Over five million visitors participate in recreation activities at the three largest COE sites each year. Over 2,347 surface acres of water are open to recreation, providing swimming, boating, sailing, jetskiing, fishing and other water-based sports.

## Volunteers

Volunteers help to staff the information desk during the busiest months of May to September at the South Platte Visitor Center at Chatfield Lake. Volunteers assist by greeting the public, disbursing brochures, answering questions, conducting tours, and explaining exhibits.

## Economic Benefits

According to the National Recreation Management System (NRMS), a 1999-2000 study profiling visitor spending at select COE sites, Colorado benefited greatly from the following COE sites:

### Chatfield Lake

- \$23.90 million in visitor spending within 30 miles of the Corps Lake. 62% of the spending was captured by local economy as direct sales effects.
- Supported 671 jobs in the local communities

### Bear Creek Lake

- \$4.48 million in visitor spending within 30 miles of the lake. 57% of the spending was captured by local economy as direct sales effects
- Supported 120 jobs in the local community

### Cherry Creek Lake:

- \$42.39 million in visitor spending within 30 miles of the park. 66% of the spending was captured by local economy as direct sales effects
- Supported 1,191 jobs in the community surrounding the lake

## Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)



## Agency Overview

The mission of BOR is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public. Established in 1902, the BOR was originally created to develop water projects for irrigation and power production in the 17 western states. The building of these dams, powerplants and canals led to homesteading and promoted the development of the west. To date, BOR has constructed more than 600 dams and reservoirs and are the largest wholesaler of water in the country.

Historically, the main purpose of the BOR has been to create water supplies and power, and recreation was an incidental benefit. However, that has changed significantly in recent years and the BOR now highlights recreation as a major feature of water projects. This was exemplified during the construction of Ridgway State Park. Located near the town of Ridgway, about 25 miles south of Montrose, this reservoir-based state park is a BOR water project. The BOR and Colorado State Parks collaborated on the design, construction and management of the recreation facilities to fulfill the needs of both agencies.

Nearly 200 of the 308 BOR recreation areas are managed by non-federal governmental entities, such as state and county parks. Some are managed by other federal agencies like the National Park Service and the USFS. BOR is involved in nearly 20 cooperative projects within Colorado. Curecanti National Recreation in Colorado is one of eight National Recreation Areas (NRAs) managed by the National Park Service.

Colorado State Parks manages recreation at eight BOR reservoirs. Since 1994, progress has continued to renovate facilities at five West Slope BOR parks, operated by State Parks. With Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) matching funds, State Parks and BOR continue to make great strides in this unique partnership to cost-share the reconstruction of these outdated parks.

The total five-park reconstruction project, made possible by legislation passed in Congress with the help of Colorado's congressional delegation, is authorized for a total cost of \$30 million. BOR's commitment to match every dollar State Parks contributes has enabled the agencies to complete major renovations at Crawford, Vega, Navajo and upgrades are beginning at Rifle Gap State Park in Garfield County. Final work through this agreement will be pursued at Paonia Reservoir. In addition to splitting capital costs, Parks has worked out an agreement for the BOR to share up to 50% of the operational budget shortfalls of these parks (except Vega) once they are reconstructed. Continuation of this remarkable partnership will help prevent resource damage and will enhance visitor experience. Current annual visitation is about 500,000 at all five of the parks that will be rebuilt through this agreement. Through another cost-share agreement, renovations at Bonny Reservoir have also taken place.

Along with 14 other federal agencies, BOR is involved in a Stream Corridor Restoration Project. Aiming to enhance and preserve the environmental, historic, cultural, and recreational aspects of stream corridors, the committee has created a benchmark document used by these agencies, as well as many others who are interested in restoring the functions and values of the nation's stream corridors.

To re-establish self-sustaining fish populations and allow current and future water development, several federal and state agencies, water user groups, and environmental organizations in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming formed the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program. Reclamation has been involved in this effort since the program began in 1988. Modified operations recreate more natural flow patterns at federal and nonfederal projects in the upper Colorado River Basin, protecting spring peak flows and improving endangered fish.

### Recreation Opportunities

The BOR maintains 308 recreation sites in the western states visited by 90 million people a year. These reservoirs provide boating, fishing, waterskiing, sailing, swimming, picnicking, and camping. Fishing and boating are the most popular activities, accounting for more than 27 million user days on about 1.7 million surface acres of water. Over 200 concessions operators offer facilities and services to the recreating public like marinas, campgrounds, swimming beaches, equestrian centers and golf courses. Colorado contains over 30 BOR reservoir sites.

Many facilities at BOR properties have been designed for accessibility to the physically-challenged. Accessible fishing docks, picnic tables, and campsites have created more recreation opportunities to the disabled. Ridgway State Park, a BOR property leased and managed by Colorado State Parks, is considered to be one of the most accessible parks in the country.

### STATE RECREATION PROVIDERS

#### *Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR)*



The DNR was created to develop, protect and enhance Colorado natural resources for the use and enjoyment of the state's present and future residents, as well as for visitors to the state.

Established in 1968, the Colorado Department of Natural Resources is comprised of eight divisions: Board of Land Commissioners, Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Forestry, Water Conservation Board, Water Resources, Minerals and Geology, Wildlife, and Oil and Gas Conservation Commission. Collectively, these divisions, with the guidance of boards and commissions, carry out the department's responsibilities for stewardship of 1) water, 2) outdoor recreation, 3) minerals, energy and geology, 4) wildlife, and 5) land management.

#### *Colorado Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (Colorado State Parks)*



Colorado State Parks protects and preserves 40 established parks and three parks under development. Nearly 11 million annual visitors enjoy State Parks. The state parks system encompasses approximately 200,000 acres. Only 21% of this acreage is owned by State Parks. The remaining 79% is leased from federal, local and private entities. State Parks are a vital cornerstone in Colorado's economy and quality of life, offering some of the highest quality outdoor recreation destinations in the state.

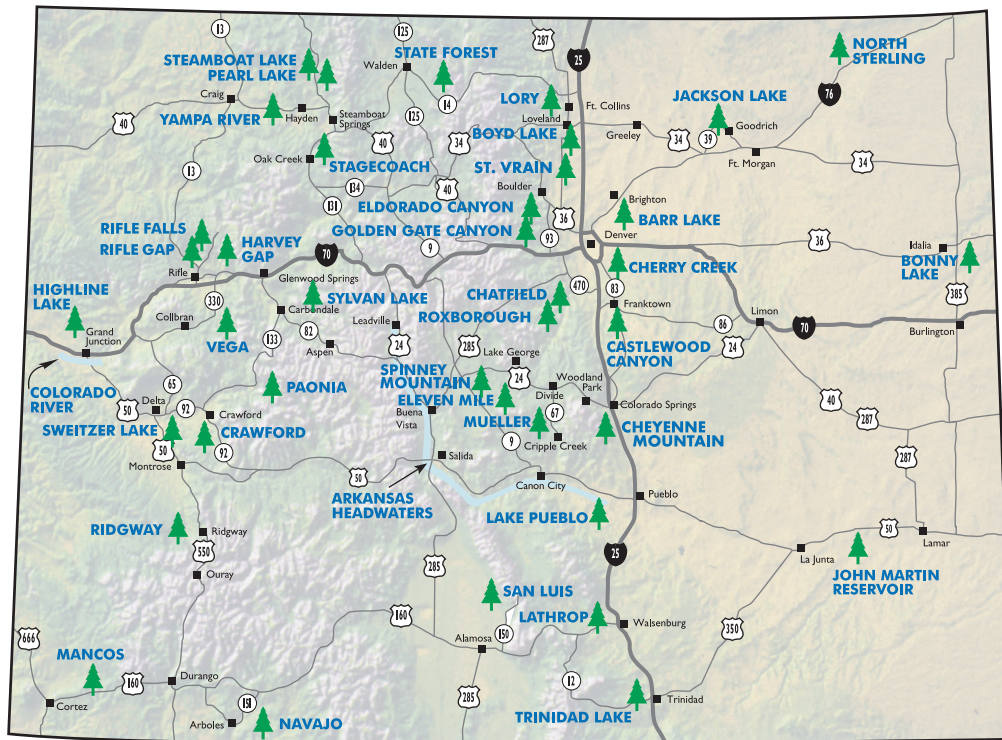
It is the mission of State Parks "To provide a spectrum of safe, quality outdoor recreation experiences for our visitors while effectively managing the natural resources under our authority."

The State Board of Parks & Outdoor Recreation, a five-member citizen board appointed by the Governor, provides policy guidance. Membership includes one from each of the former four state park regions and one at-large member.

Supervision of park operations is divided among two geographic regions: High Plains and Rocky Mountains with offices in Grand Junction and Denver. Service centers are located in Littleton, Colorado Springs, and Ft. Collins.

Along with the Division's park management responsibilities, State Parks is active in statewide recreation programs and efforts to protect and preserve Colorado's outdoor ecosystems. The Division manages or is a partner in a number of programs designed to serve a wide range of the public, enrich the natural resources under its stewardship, and provide education to foster an appreciation for Colorado's natural heritage.

## Map 19: Colorado State Parks



Source: Colorado State Parks, 2003

### Program areas include the following:

- State Trails Program
- Boat Safety and Vessel Registration
- Snowmobile Registration Program
- Off-Highway Vehicle Registration Program
- River Outfitter Licensing
- Volunteerism Program
- Environmental Education and Interpretation
- Land and Water
- Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
- Watchable Wildlife In Parks Program
- Resource Stewardship and GIS Program
- Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP)

**The State Trails Program:** This program provides for year round hiking, riding, bicycling, and other compatible recreational activities involving trails across the state; assists in the development of trails on public and private lands; and

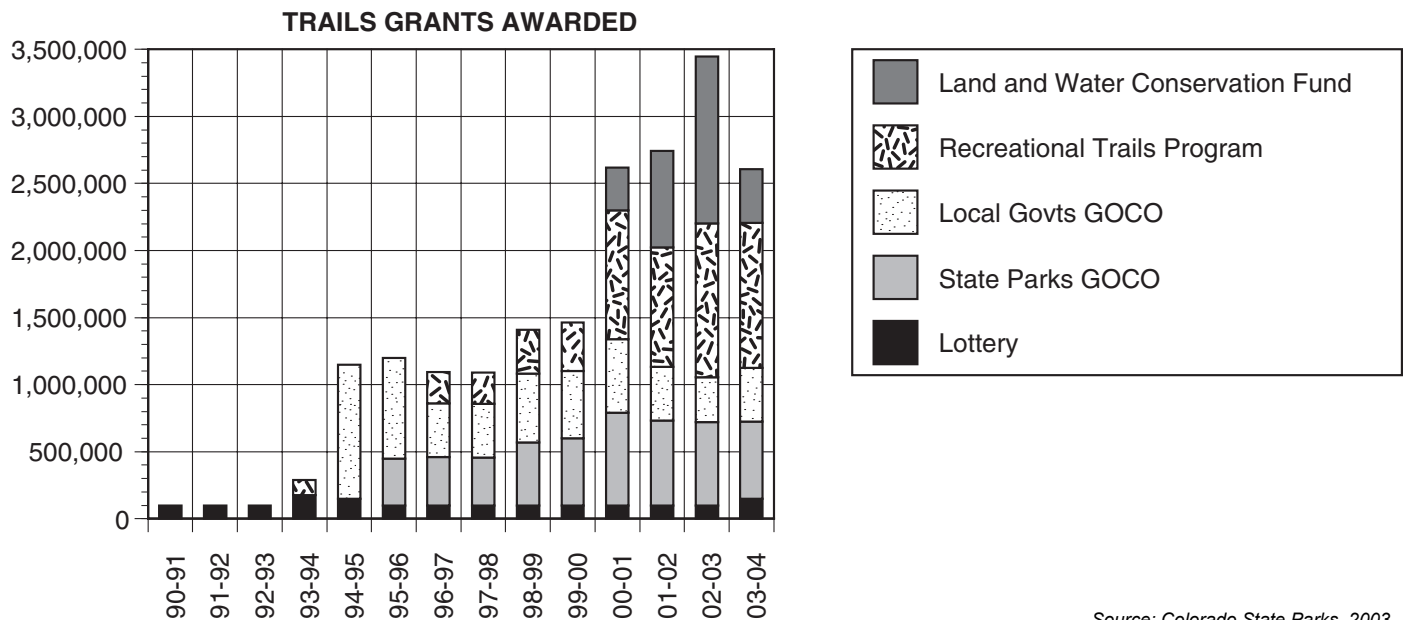
provides for the needs of recreational motor vehicles. The Program is responsible for distributing about \$5-6 million in trail grants statewide every year, which are funded through Lottery, GOCO, off-highway vehicle and snowmobile registration, LWCF, and federal Recreational Trails Program money.

Over \$19.4 million in grants has been awarded by the State Trails Program since 1990. An eight member State Trails Committee comprised of citizen volunteers from the range of trail interests is appointed by the State Parks Board. The Committee provides guidance on program policies and plays an active role in reviewing and approving the annual Trails Program grants.

In January 2000, Colorado State Parks published *On Nature's Trail: A Guide to the Future of Colorado's Statewide Trails System*. This plan laid the foundation for what a statewide trail system should look like in order to provide a variety of recreational experiences for its users. In addition to designing strategic goals for a statewide trail system, the plan advocates a revision in existing programs and a package of funding initiatives to help direct funding where it is most needed.



**Figure 102: Trails Grants Awarded by State Parks Since 1992**



Source: Colorado State Parks, 2003

Under the leadership of the State Parks Board, the State Trails Program is spearheading a new initiative to build a continuous Colorado Front Range Trail from Wyoming to New Mexico. Envisioned is a 725 mile network of interconnected loops from Fort Collins to Trinidad, serving the 80% of Colorado's population that dwells along the Front Range. After two years of collaborative planning with community and recreation stakeholders, completed segments were dedicated as the initial Front Range Trail system during 2003. With 190 miles of the trails already built, 260 miles more are in the planning and design phases, including 160 miles along low use roads.

The Trails Program also provides other aid to individuals, non-profit organizations, local communities, state and federal agencies in technical assistance, planning, coordination with other agencies, trail volunteer organization, working with trail foundations, trail dedication through land development regulations and providing a resource center on all aspects of trails.

The Trails Program works closely with the Colorado Youth Corps Association to incorporate youth employment and training into projects funded by Program grants. In 2003, 20 projects funded by the Trails Program were built with the help of community youth corps.

The State Trails Program is organized around three types of trail uses:

- **The Recreational Trails Program** focuses on multi-use, non-motorized trails. Communities, non-profits and federal agencies compete in a \$3-4 million annual grants program for trail planning, design, construction and maintenance projects.
- **The Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Registration Program** improves and enhances motorized recreation opportunities across the state while promoting safe, responsible use for off-highway vehicles. Administration of the program includes a grant program which awards \$1.5 - 2 million in annual grants to agencies and non-profits to construct and maintain off-highway trails; information and awareness on the availability of off-highway vehicle recreational opportunities; promotion of off-highway vehicle safety; establishment and maintenance of OHV routes, parking areas, and facilities; and purchase or lease of private land for the purposes of access to public land for OHV uses. Funding for these activities comes from off-highway vehicle registration fees.
- **The Snowmobile Registration Program** provides the funding base for the mandatory safety certification of young operators, enforcement of registration requirements, trail marking and signing, and the establishment and maintenance (grooming) of snowmobile trails and related facilities. Over 33,000 machines were registered in the 2002 season.

Registration dollars fund contracts between the Snowmobile Program and community-based clubs to groom about 2,600 miles of winter trails annually. While providing winter trail opportunities for winter recreationists, including skiers and snowshoers, these trail systems also help support viable winter economies for mountain communities.

**Boat Safety and Vessel Registration:** As part of state implementation of the federal Boat Safety Act, Colorado State Parks is responsible for registration of vessels, including sailboats, motorboats and personal watercraft, providing boat safety education and encouraging safe boating on all waters in Colorado. The Boat Safety Program promotes safe operating and improving boating experiences. Funding for this program comes from boat registration fees, fees paid for boat safety courses, and federal funds from the US Coast Guard which also support boating activities within State Parks and boat patrolling at lakes, reservoirs, and rivers statewide. This program registered 107,600 boats in 2002.

**River Outfitter Licensing:** This program is responsible for licenses and regulation of commercial river outfitters to ensure the safety and welfare of commercial passengers engaged in river running activities. The Commercial River Outfitter Licensing program registered 190 outfitters in 2002. Funding for these activities comes from license fees paid by river outfitters.

The River Outfitter Licensing Program was established by the Colorado Legislature in 1984. The program gave responsibility to the Board of Parks and Outdoor Recreation for enacting rules and regulations necessary to govern the annual licensing for river outfitters, regulate the river outfitters, ensure the safety of river running activities, and to carry out the licensing program. In order to enforce the state statutes and the Parks Board regulations pertaining to the river outfitter-licensing program, Colorado State Parks temporarily employs state peace officers that serve as “river rangers.”

**Outdoor Education and Interpretation Programs:** Developing an awareness and understanding of Colorado’s natural and cultural resources, interpretive activities provide leisure opportunities for citizens and visitors to the state. Program activities include coordination of interpretive services within the state parks and youth education programs in partnership with educational agencies statewide. Over a million visitors are reached through personal and non-personal interpretation in state parks on an annual basis. Most interpretive activities are funded primarily through GOCO grants.

**The Watchable Wildlife in Parks Program.** This joint long-term project between Colorado State Parks (Parks) and DOW has been in full operation since 1993. To enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in state parks, the WWIP project was developed to increase visitor enjoyment of, knowledge of, and appreciation for wildlife in state parks, while protecting resources from the impacts of public use. Since inception, over 80 projects have been completed including the publishing of wildlife-related brochures and construction of interpretive amenities including visitor centers, interpretive kiosks, and viewing outlooks in various parks. Through collaboration, the sharing of resources, expertise, visitors and park resources reap the benefits of added capabilities for enhancing wildlife viewing while reducing human caused impacts to wildlife habitats.

**Land and Water:** This program area focuses on land and water acquisition and management issues. Within the program, water issues related to levels at the park reservoirs and streams, water quality and other environmental concerns are addressed as well as implementation of a long-term plan of prioritized water needs and acquisitions through a number of mechanisms, including water purchases, options, leases and cooperative agreements. The real estate unit is responsible for negotiation of parksland leases, easements and purchases of inholdings and buffers, boundary disputes and right-of-way problems statewide. Funding for these projects comes from Lottery and Great Outdoors Colorado grants.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program:** State Parks is statutorily designated as the state agency to distribute stateside LWCF allocations to Colorado. Staff is responsible for administering a grant program to local governments and for monitoring compliance with federal guidelines for approximately 1,000 projects funded with LWCF since the 1960’s. State Parks has granted over \$6.1 million for 30 LWCF projects since funding was reinstated in 2000. The majority of these grants were awarded to local governments for trail construction and to State Parks for development of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. The program also coordinates the update of this SCORP Planning document every five years.

**Resource Stewardship and Geographic Information System (GIS) Program:** The Resource Stewardship and GIS Section was developed to protect the biological assets of state parks for current and future generations. To accomplish these goals and objectives,

each park has a guiding Stewardship Plan consisting of a natural resource assessment, data compilation into a park-specific GIS, a comprehensive stewardship plan, and GIS training for park managers. The stewardship project and GIS department will enable park management to make informed decisions to protect the unique natural resources in their trust.

#### **The Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP):**

Through a statewide system of designated natural areas, CNAP preserves, protects and enhances areas in the state having diverse or unique native plant communities, special geologic and paleontology features, and/or habitats for rare or endangered plants and animals for education and scientific research use and benefit.

Created through legislation in 1977, CNAP's mandate is to identify outstanding natural features and sites throughout the state, to recognize landowners for their stewardship of these places, and to work with interested landowners to maintain important pieces of Colorado's natural heritage. In order to qualify for the Colorado Natural Areas program, sites must contain at least one unique or exceptional feature of statewide significance – native plant communities, geologic formations, fossils or specific habitat for rare plants, for example.

All management agreements are voluntary. Official designation of sites as Natural Areas is granted by the State Parks Board upon recommendation by the Natural Areas Council.

#### **Over the last 25 years, the Colorado Natural Areas Program has completed many milestones towards conserving lands within Colorado:**

- Over 100 natural areas have been designated or registered, protecting habitat for 180 species of rare animals, plants, or community types
- Over 100 research grants have been awarded
- 52 wetland surveys and projects at state parks
- Field evaluations or reports on 67 U.S. Forest Service research natural areas
- 11 years of State Land Board surveys covering 2.7 million acres.
- Four years of EPA wetland surveys
- Two statewide geology site studies
- 38 management and protection projects on natural areas

## **Recreation Planning**

State Parks conducts strategic planning on several levels. State Parks annually updates the Horizons five-year plan. Each park also operates according to a management plan and many parks now have Stewardship Plans to address the management of the natural resources at each park. In addition to the Stewardship Plan, most parks utilize GIS to assist with recreation planning. Strategic plans are completed for the State Trails Program and for the Division's marketing efforts.

## **Recreation Opportunities**

Visitors come to pursue a variety of interests at Colorado's 40 state parks: fishing, camping, hiking, boating, biking, picnicking, rock climbing, wildlife watching, ice fishing, water skiing, horseback riding, nature study, skating, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, jet skiing, and more. State Park campgrounds offer pull-in, tent, and backcountry camping.

Natural areas offer opportunities for education, interpretation, scientific studies and passive recreation.

## **Volunteers**

Providing crucial support to parks statewide, volunteers are heavily integrated into the operation and maintenance of most state parks. The volunteerism program at State Parks is on the rise with an increasing number of volunteers each year. Many parks have organized volunteer groups which provide ongoing assistance through trail building, maintenance, and interpretive programs. Some "Friends" groups operate gift shops in park headquarters where visitors can purchase books and materials about the wildlife and natural history of the area. Additional volunteers also conduct bird inventories and create bird watching checklists for parks. Monitoring of natural resources is also part of volunteerism at state parks. Over 100,000 volunteer hours were recorded in 2002.

## ***Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW)***

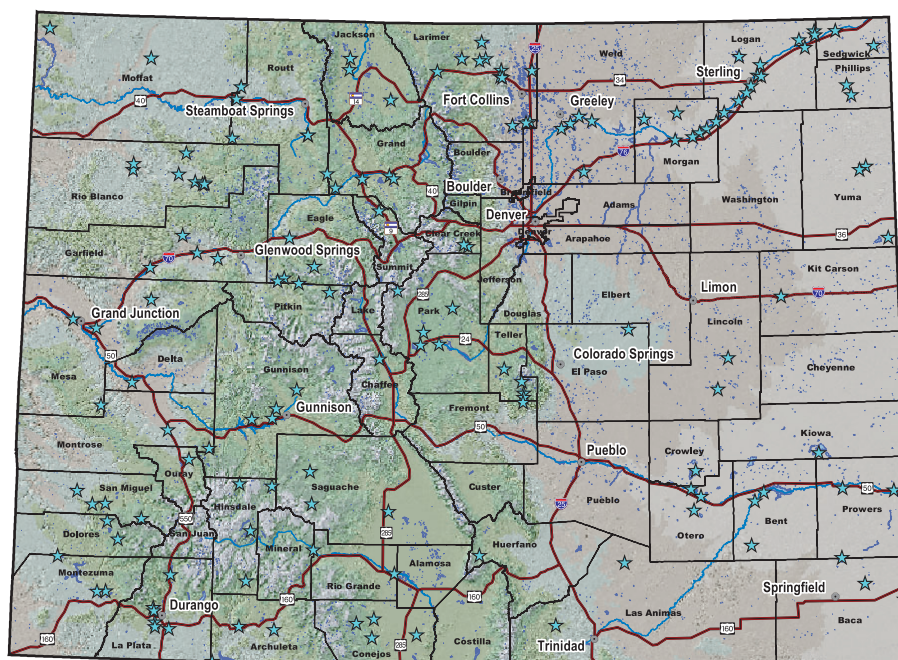
### **Agency Overview**

The mission of the DOW is to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state and provide people the opportunity to enjoy them.

The DOW manages the state's 960 wildlife species, regulating hunting and fishing activities by issuing licenses and enforcing regulations. The division also owns more than 230 wildlife areas for public recreation, conducts research to improve wildlife management activities, provides technical assistance to private and other public landowners



## Map 20: Division of Wildlife Areas



Map Scale = 1 : 2,700,000

Source: Colorado State Parks GIS Dept., 2002

concerning wildlife and habitat management, and develops programs to protect and recover threatened and endangered species. Wildlife regulations are established by the Wildlife Commission.

The agency maintains Regional Service Centers in Denver, Grand Junction and Colorado Springs, as well as Area Service Centers in 16 other cities and towns across the state.

The Wildlife Commission sets Division of Wildlife regulations and policies for hunting, fishing, watchable wildlife, and nongame, threatened and endangered species. It is also responsible for making decisions about buying or leasing property for habitat and public access and for approving the Division's annual budget proposals and long-range plans. The Colorado Wildlife Commission is an eleven-member board appointed by the governor consisting of nine voting members and two non-voting members. The non-voting, or "ex-officio" members are the Executive Director for the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the State Agriculture Commissioner.

The DOW does not receive state tax revenue. All hunting and fishing license fees are deposited in a game cash fund with the state Legislature having final authority over DOW spending.

### Recreation Opportunities and Planning

DOW manages over 230 state wildlife areas which encompass approximately 257,000 acres open to fishing, hunting, and wildlife recreation. Activities vary at each SWA, some offer hunting, fishing, or wildlife watching while others permit additional activities such as boating, sail boating, sail surfing, waterskiing, camping, hiking, wildlife viewing and picnicking. Both warmwater and coldwater fishing exist, including ice fishing and fly fishing. Hunting opportunities include waterfowl, turkey, small game, and big game. Some properties permit field trials, a form of wildlife-related recreation which, through training and competition, results in highly trained hunting dogs which contribute to the overall improvement of hunting dog breeds and retrieval of game birds.

In 1993, the State Land Board and DOW entered into an agreement to lease about 500,000 acres of trust lands with the best wildlife values for wildlife-related recreation over a 10-year period. At nine years into the program, with new enrollments and deletions, the lease total will be approximately 469,000 acres. In several cases, these tracts provide or improve access to adjacent state wildlife areas, BLM, or USFS property. These tracts may have several lease activities occurring during the year, such as farming, livestock grazing,



mineral activity, and timber activity. Activities on State Trust Lands are limited to hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching and are open to the public seasonally with restrictions.

### **Programs**

The DOW focuses on four primary areas: hunting, fishing, watchable wildlife, and non-game, threatened and endangered species. DOW is involved in numerous programs aimed at managing wildlife and wildlife habitat across the state. Some of the major programs include:

### **Wetlands**

The Wetlands Program protects wetlands and wetlands-dependent wildlife through incentives and other voluntary means. For the purpose of this wetland program, protection means the use of some or all of the following tools: restoration, management, purchase of conservation easements or fee titles by land trusts, private landowners, non-government organizations or government agencies such as, county and municipal open space programs, State Parks, or DOW.

The Division of Wildlife's Wetlands Initiative is an endeavor to protect biologically significant wetlands and wetland-dependent wildlife in Colorado. The initiative is administered through DOW's Wetlands Program in partnership with private landowners and several organizations, including GOCO, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy and State Parks. Through voluntary, incentive-based mechanisms, the Wetlands Initiative has been very successful in protecting significant areas around the state. For more information, see Appendix C: SCORP Wetlands Component.

### **Preserving Colorado's Landscapes**

In 1999, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), DOW, and GOCO entered into a partnership to protect Colorado's most precious natural lands. The Preserving Colorado Landscapes Legacy was established to address the urgent issue of the loss of biological diversity by protecting biologically significant species and their habitat, with recreation and open space as subsidiary benefits. Between 1999 and 2001, this project translated approximately \$5 million from GOCO into nearly 150,000 acres of conserved land, 4,500-acre feet of water rights and over \$16,000,000 in matching funds.

### **Colorado Species Conservation Partnership**

In partnership, DOW, GOCO, private landowners and non-governmental organizations have created the Colorado Species Conservation Partnership, a far-reaching species protection.

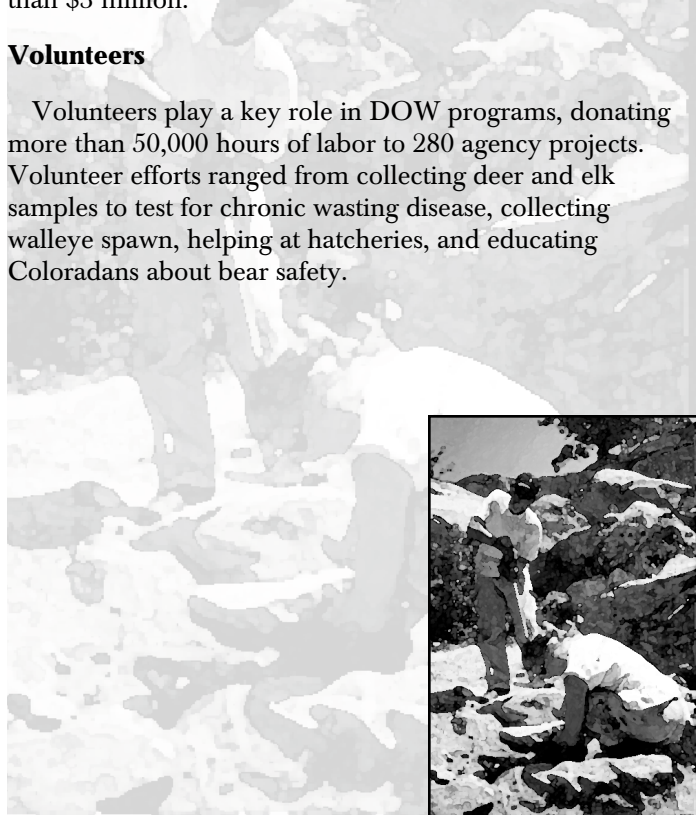
The protection strategy entails the use of habitat protection tools such as conservation easements, leases and management agreements that provide incentives to private landowners to actively assist with the management and protection of Colorado's declining species.

### **Fishing Is Fun**

Through the "Fishing Is Fun" program, the DOW provides grants matching local funds to improve aquatic habitat and fishing access. "Fishing Is Fun" grants awarded to seven projects added new fishing opportunities for almost 26,000 anglers in 2002. The projects ranged from upgrading several small ponds to constructing trails, parking and other structures at Antero Reservoir in South Park, Lake Lehow Pond in Waterton Canyon in the southwest Denver area, Milliken Ponds, Pioneer Lake in Yuma, Doty Pond in Brush, the Runyon Lake project in Pueblo and Hayden Meadows in Leadville. Total value of the projects was more than \$3 million.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers play a key role in DOW programs, donating more than 50,000 hours of labor to 280 agency projects. Volunteer efforts ranged from collecting deer and elk samples to test for chronic wasting disease, collecting walleye spawn, helping at hatcheries, and educating Coloradans about bear safety.



## Colorado State Land Board (SLB)



The Colorado State Land Board (SLB) is the second largest landholder in Colorado, with approximately 2.6 million acres of surface land and four million acres of mineral rights, according to their 2002 Annual Report. Colorado's state lands were given to the state by the federal government at statehood in 1876. In 2002, SLB generated \$51.2 million to support eight trusts, the largest of which benefits K-12th grade public education in the state.

The SLB operates according to the following mission statement:

"To manage the assets entrusted to our care for our beneficiaries by producing a reasonable and consistent income with long term protection of economic values, while providing responsible environmental stewardship to ensure the conservation of natural resources."

The SLB manages trust lands for ranching, farming, timber production, recreation, mineral and oil and gas production, and other uses. One SLB-managed parcel might have several different leases, including recreation.

While some state trust lands are open for recreation, including the 72,000 acre Colorado State Forest in Jackson County managed by Colorado State Parks, lands are often leased to private parties, limiting recreation access. In 1993, the State Land Board and DOW entered into an agreement to lease about 500,000 acres of trust lands with the best wildlife values over a 10-year period. Nine years into the program, with new enrollments and deletions, the lease total will be approximately 469,000 acres. Selected parcels are open with restrictions for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching opportunities during a limited, seasonal period. In several cases, these tracts provide or improve access to adjacent state wildlife areas, state parks, BLM, or USFS property.

Because the SLB's first responsibility is to its trust beneficiaries, state trust lands are not considered 'public lands' in the same way USFS or BLM lands are managed. Unless a local government, state agency, or private individual has offered to pay for the right to have recreational use, and taken responsibility for managing that recreation, the land is closed to public recreation.

While the SLB's mandate remains essentially the same as it did at its inception, in 1996 voters amended the Colorado constitution's provisions governing the SLB. To protect the

long-term productivity and sound stewardship of lands held in trust by the Board, voters directed the agency to create a "Stewardship Trust" of 295,000 to 300,000 acres, approximately 10% of the lands maintained by SLB. These lands continue to be managed for the beneficiaries, but with special care for conservation of natural resources.



## ***Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)***



The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) was created in 1937 and is the state executive branch agency responsible for state water policy and planning. The CWCB's mission is to promote the protection, conservation and development of Colorado's water resources and minimize the risk of flood damage. Its major programs include Water Supply Protection; Water Supply Planning and Finance; Conservation and Drought Planning; Flood Protection; Instream Flow and Natural Lake Protection; and Water Information. The agency operates under the direction of a 15-member board comprised of representatives from eight major river basins and the City and County of Denver plus the DNR Executive Director, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Colorado Attorney General, the State Engineer, the Division of Wildlife Director, and the CWCB Director.

The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is responsible for the appropriation, acquisition, and protection of instream flows and natural lake level water rights to preserve the natural environment to a reasonable degree. Since the creation of the State's Instream Flow Program in 1973, the CWCB has appropriated instream flow water rights on more than 8,000 miles of streams and 475 natural lakes in the state. Instream flows affect recreation opportunities, particularly whitewater rafting, kayaking, boating, and shoreline uses such as camping and fishing.

The CWCB administers the CWCB Construction Fund, a partially self-supporting revolving loan fund. Sources of revenue are from the return of principal and interest on outstanding loans, interest earned on the cash balance of the fund through investments by the State Treasurer, mineral lease fund distributions, and occasional cash transfers from the General Assembly. The total equity of the fund, including cash and loans receivable, had risen to over \$185 million by June 1996. As of June 1996, the fund has been used to support a total of 137 locally-sponsored water projects through over \$96 million in loans. Twelve construction projects representing over \$19.7 million in loans were completed in FY 95-96.

### ***Division of Water Resources***

The Division of Water Resources administers and enforces all surface and ground water rights throughout the State of Colorado, issues water well permits,

approves construction and repair of dams, and enforces interstate compacts. The Division of Water Resources is also responsible for implementing and enforcing the statutes of the Ground Water Management Act passed by the Legislature as well as implementing applicable rules and policies adopted by the Colorado Ground Water Commission.

## ***Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS)***

The Colorado State Forest Service, an agency of Colorado State University, offers Colorado citizens an easily accessible source of professional and technical forestry assistance along with educational outreach. The modern Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) was created in 1955 to protect and improve our environment through sound forestry practices and conservation education. CSFS uses a stewardship approach to encourage landowners to meet individual objectives for their property and maintain or improve overall forest health which improves watershed conditions, wildlife habitat, and recreation resources. Nineteen field offices around the state help facilitate interaction and education with landowners.

An active participant in mitigating impacts of wildfires on communities and the environment, CSFS is involved in educating landowners and assisting with the National Fire Plan grants and programs. The National Fire Plan, a cooperative, long-term effort of the USFS, Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters, has allocated over \$44 million to the state of Colorado to manage wildfire. Program activities are designed to respond to the severe wildfires of 2001, reduce their impacts on rural communities, and enhance firefighting capabilities in the future.

### **Recreation Opportunities**

The State Forest's recreational uses are administered by the State Parks, which has leased the area for public recreation from the Colorado Board of Land Commissioners since 1972. The State Forest offers many recreational possibilities such as backpacking, hiking, horseback riding, lake and stream fishing, camping, and four-wheeling.

### **Volunteerism**

According to CSFS, volunteerism is one of the best forms of adult learning. The Volunteer Forest Steward Program is an extensive program involving 40 hours of forestry and outreach-related education. In return, these volunteers help preserve Colorado's natural resources by volunteering their time to the stewardship of Colorado's forest resources.



## Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)



In 1992, residents of the state of Colorado voted to approve an amendment that required a 50% allocation of state lottery proceeds towards the creation of the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Trust Fund. The GOCO Trust Fund allocates grants for projects that preserve, protect, and enhance Colorado's wildlife, parks, rivers, trails, and open spaces. Since its inception in 1994, GOCO has awarded almost \$290 million for 1,700 projects throughout the state. The creation of GOCO has provided Colorado with unique opportunities to fund programs that are critical to the protection and continued support of our natural heritage, quality of life, recreational amenities and working landscapes.

GOCO's funding is capped at \$35 million a year with annual inflation adjustments. If GOCO's share exceeds that amount, the remainder goes into the State Public School

### *Benefits from GOCO Funding*

- 519 outdoor recreation projects received \$44.3 million through Colorado State Parks.
- 147 open space projects have received \$36.4 million.
- 605 community park, outdoor recreation, and environmental education facilities have received \$27.2 million.
- 186 wildlife-related projects received \$53 million from the Colorado DOW.
- 262 trail projects have received \$7.4 million.
- 231 projects have received \$8.6 million to plan for future open space, trail, park, and outdoor projects and to develop the capacity to manage them.
- 328,756 acres of open space are being preserved in perpetuity including land along river corridors and in mountain valleys, land for wildlife habitats, agricultural lands, land in the heart of cities, land that separates communities, lands that buffer state and local parks from encroaching development.
- 47,041 acres of land have been acquired for future state parks and a state wildlife area.
- 569 miles of trails have been built or restored

Fund. In 2003, the adjusted cap of \$48 million in GOCO proceeds was reached.

The remaining lottery proceeds are divided between the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (10%) and the Conservation Trust Fund (40%), which distributes funding directly to local governments through the Department of Local Affairs.

The Colorado Constitution requires GOCO to allocate its proceeds for four purposes in substantially equal portions over time:

- Investments in wildlife through the Colorado DOW
- Investments in the outdoor recreation resources through the State Parks
- Competitive grants to acquire and manage open space to State Parks and DOW, and to counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions of the state, or non-profit land conservation organizations
- Competitive matching grants to local governments or other entities which are eligible for distributions from the Conservation Trust Fund, to acquire, develop, or manage open lands and parks

### *Legacy Projects – Summary Description*

The Legacy projects are efforts that have regional or statewide significance and typically fall under two or more of the program funding categories of outdoor recreation, wildlife, open space and local government. They are large-scale, multi-year projects to which GOCO has made multi-million dollar commitments. To date, 19 Legacy Projects have received \$118.3 million in funding. Entities eligible to receive Legacy funding are local governments, nonprofit land conservation organizations, the Colorado DOW and State Parks. The following are brief descriptions of signature Legacy Projects representative of the range of these initiatives.

- **The Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy Project**, which has received \$5.48 million from GOCO, is the product of an unusual coalition. A group of ranchers, environmentalists, local governments, businesses, and citizens came together in 1996 to find ways of preserving agricultural land under intense development pressure. Working with GOCO, the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy and other partners,



the coalition has preserved 17 family ranches through conservation easements in Gunnison County. A total of 6,650 acres of valuable open space, wildlife habitat and working landscapes are now protected.

- **The I-25 Conservation Corridor Project** in Douglas County has received \$13.30 million to help protect 30,000 acres between Castle Rock and the El Paso County line. In March 2000, The Conservation Fund, a national land trust, entered into a contract with the owners of the Greenland Ranch, the oldest operating cattle ranch on the Front Range. A conservation buyer acquired 17,400 acres of the ranch east of I-25; a conservation easement limits future development on this section. GOCO and Douglas County each contributed \$9.2 million to pay for a small portion of the easement and to buy 3,700 acres west of I-25. Without protection of Greenland Ranch, metropolitan Denver and Colorado Springs might have someday merged.
- **The South Platte River Project** is a major outdoor recreation initiative for the City and County of Denver that received a \$7.78 million Legacy grant from GOCO. The South Platte River winds its way through Colorado's largest urban center encompassing two-thirds of the state's urban population, including many of Denver's inner-city neighborhoods. With Legacy funding, precious river corridor open space has been acquired; wildlife habitat is being improved and expanded; parks are being completed along the entire stretch of river including Commons Park in Downtown Denver; extensive trail improvements are being made; and educational programs are being conducted that will reach nearly every primary and secondary school child in Denver.
- **Cheyenne Mountain State Park**, El Paso County's first state park, was preserved through a GOCO grant of \$8.3 million to acquire the JL Ranch at the southern edge of Colorado Springs, Colorado's second largest city. At 1,680 acres, it is one of the largest remaining tracts of open space in the Colorado Springs area and was the highest conservation priority in the City's open space plan. A wealth of wildlife, including bear, mountain lion, deer, fox and many bird species are found on the property, which lies at the base of Cheyenne Mountain. Colorado State Parks has completed a collaborative park design process involving local citizens and officials and will leverage additional GOCO funds with LWCF and

lottery funds to develop hiking, biking, camping, special events and cabins facilities.

- **The Preserving Colorado Landscapes Grant**, awarded to the team of the Colorado DOW and The Nature Conservancy, has received \$12.62 million to develop a blueprint for protecting priority landscapes in Colorado. The significance of the priority areas will be based on native and rare species, natural communities, and wildlife habitat. One of their recent protected areas is the Medano-Zapata Ranch. The ranch is located in the San Luis Valley and is adjacent to the Great Sand Dunes National Park and the Baca Ranch and is recognized as one of the largest areas of high quality habitat in Colorado.

### *Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)*



The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) plays an important role in outdoor recreation through its roles in statewide transportation planning; distribution of federal Transportation Enhancements funds and Recreational Trails Program funds; and the Scenic Byways Program.

In 1991, the Colorado State Legislature adopted two pieces of legislation that dramatically changed transportation planning in Colorado. The first transformed the Colorado Department of Highways into to the Colorado Department of Transportation with a mission to address all modes of transportation for the state. This legislation also established a grass roots process for defining transportation needs and required the development of a comprehensive long-range Statewide Transportation Plan based on 15 Regional Transportation Plans developed by locally elected officials representing the counties and municipalities in each of the 15 Transportation Planning Regions.

### *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and Recreation*

The second 1991 legislation was the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) that similarly required the states to produce Statewide Transportation Plans and a Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. ISTEA was also the vehicle for distribution of two types of funds that directly affect recreation:

1. Transportation Enhancements Funds, which are mandated for a variety of purposes including trails and Scenic Byways. Enhancement Funds are allocated through the Regional Transportation planning process.

2. The federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which devotes a portion of federal gasoline taxes to motorized, mixed use and non-motorized trail funding. In Colorado, RTP funds are distributed through the State Parks State Trails Program annual grants process on behalf of CDOT. Currently, Congress is considering the second reauthorization of the ISTEA legislation.

## *Regional Transportation Plans and Recreation*

Pursuant to its legislatively mandated transportation planning responsibilities, the Colorado Transportation Commission in November 2000 adopted Colorado's 2020 Statewide Transportation Plan. Currently, CDOT is developing its 2030 Statewide Transportation Plan. The first step in the planning process is the development of Regional Transportation Plans. Colorado has 15 planning regions – ten rural and five urban. Each Regional Planning Commission is requested to start the regional planning process by identifying a vision for transportation in their region. The Regional Planning Commissions are asked to identify, analyze and prioritize transportation needs for the movement of people and goods for all modes of transportation, including Bicycle and Pedestrian uses along with roadway, transit, aviation and rail needs.

Regional and community bicycle and pedestrian trail systems are an important priority for local governments, as verified in the SCORP 2003 Local Government Survey referenced elsewhere in Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future. The Regional Transportation Plans can be an effective vehicle for planning long distance trail systems, such as the Front Range Trail currently under development, that have been identified as a priority by the Colorado State Parks Board.

## *Scenic Byways*

CDOT's Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program is a statewide partnership intended to provide recreational, educational and economic benefits to Coloradans and visitors. This system of outstanding routes affords the traveler interpretation and identification of key points of interest and services while providing for the protection of significant resources.

Scenic and Historic Byways are nominated by local partnership groups and designated by the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission for their exceptional scenic, historic, cultural, recreational and natural features.

Currently there are 22 designated Colorado Scenic and

Historic Byways. Each byway is marked with signs featuring a Columbine logo and is featured on state highway maps. Locations and names of Colorado's Scenic and Historic Byways can be found in the Chapter 3 regional descriptions of Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECREATION**

Nearly 400 municipalities, counties and special districts fulfill the vital role of providing the every day, close to home outdoor recreation in which Coloradans and their visitors so actively engage. Local government recreation agencies tend to focus on the more active types of recreation such as ballfields for team sports, tennis and basketball courts, swimming pools and golf courses. At the same time, agencies recognize their critical role in conserving natural open space, particularly in urbanized areas. Local recreation agencies report they own 99,300 acres of active recreation parks and 276,061 acres of open space in through fee title and conservation easements.

While the more urban county governments feature active parks and open space programs, rural counties tend to defer to their municipalities and special recreation districts to finance services and facilities. Many communities have chosen to establish special districts in order to focus dedicated taxes on recreation resources. Special districts such as the South Suburban and Foothills Parks and Recreation Districts can be particularly effective in regionalizing recreation across community boundaries.

The non-profit Colorado Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) is focused on serving local government recreation agencies in a variety of roles. Comprised of over 1,000 individual members representing 140 agencies throughout Colorado, CPRA's services include:

- Training and certification for parks and recreation professionals
- Serving as a voice for the recreation community in regional and statewide forums, including legislative issues
- Grants programs for professionals and students
- Promotion of communication and information among professionals, communities and the public

CPRA's important coordination role has been particularly evident in actions taken in response to the four-year drought cycle that Colorado has endured. Heavily dependent on irrigation water for landscape needs for local parks, ballfields and golf courses, local governments have struggled with conservation of limited water supplies. In response, CPRA has spearheaded a Water Conservation Action Plan to promote and share current water conservation best management practices through:

- Participation in the statewide Drought Task Force convened by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources
- Publishing and promoting best management practices and drought response plans
- Education and public outreach to promote water efficiency and the value of maintaining irrigation supplies for public recreation with minimal impact on overall water resources.

*Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* places particular emphasis on local recreation agencies because LWCF funding is directed specifically through federal and state statutes to capital investments in facilities, land and water. A Local Government Survey was administered through an innovative and interactive web-based method. The survey was conducted during March and April, 2003 and responses were tabulated from 251 of the 398 local recreation agencies. (See Chapter 2 and Appendix B for additional details). Survey responses on facilities and resources provided by local agencies statewide are described below:

### Recreation Planning

Of local recreation agencies responding, nearly a third operate without a park and recreation plan while more than half operate without specific resource management plans. Smaller jurisdictions, in particular, appear to lack the staffing resources to engage in planning activities.

#### *Local governments that provide recreation for Coloradans:*

- 269 towns and cities
- 65 special districts
- 64 counties

- 63% of agencies have parks and recreation plans
- 53% of agency plans are formally adopted by governing body
- 54% of plans include a trails component
- 43% of plans include resource management

### Recreation Opportunities

Local government active recreation parks reported statewide:

- 2592 developed parks, totaling 99,299 acres, featuring active recreation such as ballfields for team sports, playgrounds, swimming pools, and golf courses (see Table 127).

**Table 127: Recreation Facilities Managed by Local Governments**

Playgrounds	1,528
Baseball/softball fields	1,467
Picnic shelters	1,232
Campsites	1,093
Soccer fields	1,081
Tennis courts	882
Basketball courts	656
Multi-use courts/gyms	193
Swimming pools	176
Golf courses	75

### Open Space

Local Open Space programs recognize the emphasis Coloradans place on "quality of life" characteristics when deciding where to live. Open Space programs have helped to protect working agricultural lands, natural resources, aesthetic and recreational amenities and have been shown in many cases to increase home values and the overall attractiveness of an area.

Typically municipalities and counties that have established open space programs have been able to purchase and protect land through the use of a dedicated funding source. Dedicated funding sources are established by voter approval of a ballot measure to increase the local sales tax by a certain percentage to fund open space protection efforts.

There are presently 43 cities and counties that have established a dedicated revenue source to fund open space protection efforts. Some of the counties that are facing the highest level of population increases and development pressure have spent substantial amounts of open space dollars to provide protection for working ranches, trail construction and preservation of critical wildlife areas. Jefferson County, one of Colorado's most densely populated counties, has spent over \$286 million and has protected a total of 57,613 acres of critical recreation, wildlife, and ranch lands.

From the jurisdictions responding, the following acreages were reported:

- 1,853 open space areas focused on passive recreation uses such as scenic vistas, trails and wildlife watching.
  - 183,272 acres in fee title ownership
  - 92,789 acres of easements acquired from other fee title owners
- 276,061 total open space acres owned by local governments in fee title or easements

**Community trails** were marked by local government survey respondents as their highest priority capital need on a statewide basis. Local agencies manage:

- 1,507 trail miles – paved multi-use
- 1,231 trail miles – gravel/natural surface multi-use
- 269 miles pedestrian/hiking only
- 3,007 total trail miles managed

**Outdoor Education/Interpretation programs** appear to be a relatively low priority for local recreation agencies.

- 16% of respondents offer Outdoor Education/Interpretation programs
- 522,100 people attend programs

**Volunteer programs** are also not relied upon by most local agencies:

- 16% with volunteers for visitor services
- 12% with volunteers for maintenance/construction
- 296,300 total volunteer hours per year

**Youth conservation corps** are not employed by most local recreation agencies:

- 12% use youth conservation corps
- 32,900 crew weeks per year

### **Park, Trail, and Open Space Funding**

The local government survey conducted for *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* ranked insufficient funding and year to year budget stability as the most important issues facing local recreation agencies. At the same time, local governments report substantial investment in the outdoors.

Municipalities, counties, special districts and a limited number of school districts are eligible for annual allocations from the Conservation Trust Fund. Local governments are allocated at 40% of net proceeds of the Colorado Lottery through the constitutional provisions that direct use of the Lottery profits. Since 1983 when the lottery was initiated, the Conservation Trust Fund has distributed over \$481.1 million to local governments through its population-driven formula. Allocations currently average about \$40 million annually. Funding can be used for interests in land and water, park or recreation purposes, including open space and recreation program costs.

Local governments are also eligible for 25% of the Lottery proceeds that are constitutionally allocated through the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (GOCO) by way of a competitive grants process currently averaging about \$10 million per year. Local governments can compete for GOCO Open Space grants along with State Parks, the Division of Wildlife and non-profit conservation organizations.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has also been a significant source of funding for local government investments, totaling \$31.3 million through 795 grants from 1966-2003. Prior to congressional cessation in 1995 of appropriations to states from LWCF, State Parks operated a specific LWCF competitive grants program for a range of local agency parks, recreation, trails and open space projects. Since 2000, when Congress resumed year to year appropriations, Colorado State Parks has granted the LWCF funds to local governments through its State Trails Program competitive grants process. In 2003, \$1.4 million in LWCF funds were granted to local government trail projects.



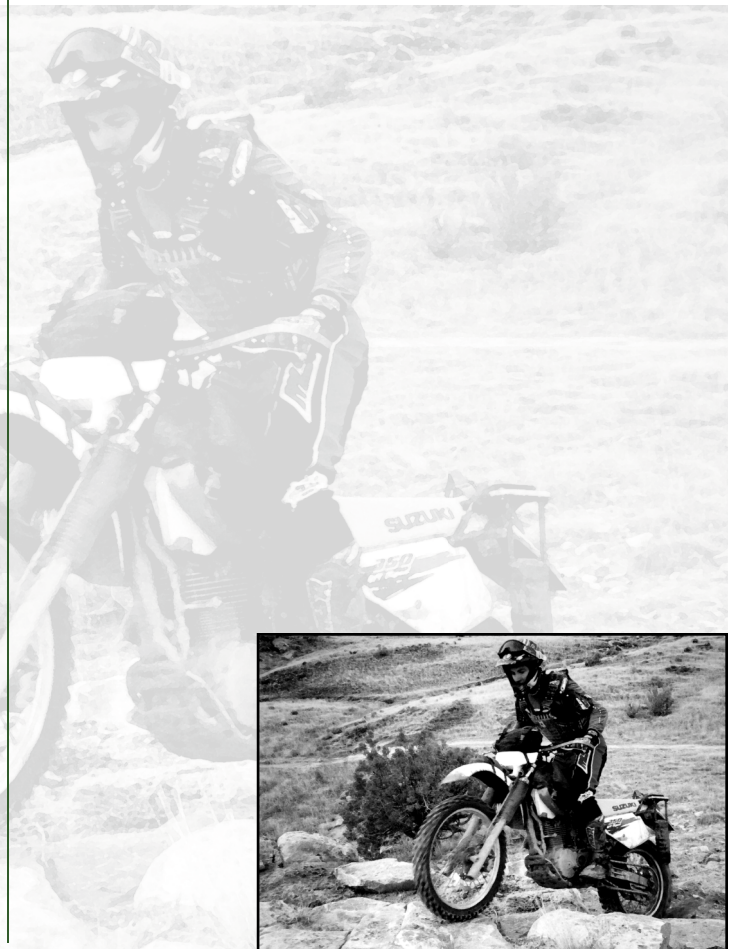
### Survey results show that:

- 36% of those responding have dedicated funding sources other than lottery for parks, open space and recreation.
- Local governments' reported five-year (2003-08) capital investment need for outdoor recreation is \$1.02 billion.
- More than half of the five-year need is already programmed in local government capital investment plans, totaling \$579.5 million.

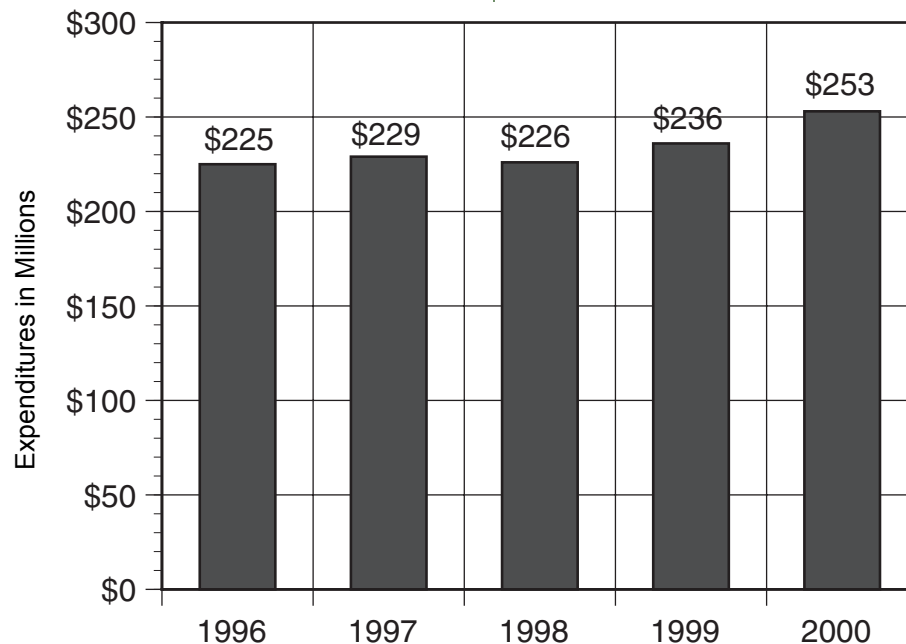
### OUTDOOR RECREATION BUSINESS

Colorado's world class outdoors resources are a critically important factor in Colorado's economy.

- Tourism is Colorado's second largest industry, adding \$7 billion to the economic base and \$550 million to state and local taxes through annual overnight tourism stays alone.
- Outdoor recreation equipment, apparel, and footwear contributes \$200 million to Colorado's economy, based on the *2002 Outdoor Industry Association's State of the Industry Report*. Combined with alpine skiing and snowboarding expenditures of 1.1 billion, total consumer spending of outdoor equipment amounted to \$1.3 billion.
- The Colorado Division of Wildlife estimates annual expenditures at \$2 billion for fishing, hunting and wildlife watching from 2.1 million participants.
- Colorado State Parks reports expenditures of \$500 million generated by 11 million park visits annually.
- The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition estimates \$230 million in annual economic impact from motorized recreation enthusiasts.
- The Colorado River Outfitters Association estimates an economic impact of \$125 million from over 523,000 whitewater trips in 2001.
- The Colorado Tourism Office reports \$312 million in expenditures from 1.6 million downhill ski and snowboard trips in 2000.



**Figure 103: Private Campground Revenue in Colorado, 1996-2000**



While many businesses are simply beneficiaries of outdoor recreation spending, others function as important outdoor recreation providers. Some of the major private sector recreation providers are described below:

### ***Private Campgrounds, Cabins, and Lodges***

Over \$253 million was spent on private campground accommodations in 2000, according to *The Economic Impact of Travel on Colorado* study commissioned by the Colorado Tourism Office. This spending is calculated by campers using commercial campgrounds estimated from the number of commercial campsites, the average occupancy of these campsites, and the average daily expenditures of visitor camp parties reported in survey data.

There are approximately 270 privately owned campgrounds in Colorado; 100 of those campground owners are members of the Colorado Campground and Lodge Owners Association (CCLOA). CCLOA has been the official organization of private campground, RV parks, cabins, and lodges in Colorado since 1968. Operating as a non-profit trade association, CCLOA provides a network of support and promotion for its members.

About half of the private campgrounds in Colorado are considered small capacity, providing less than 50 sites each.

The average fee for a full hook-up site at a private campground in Colorado is \$28.

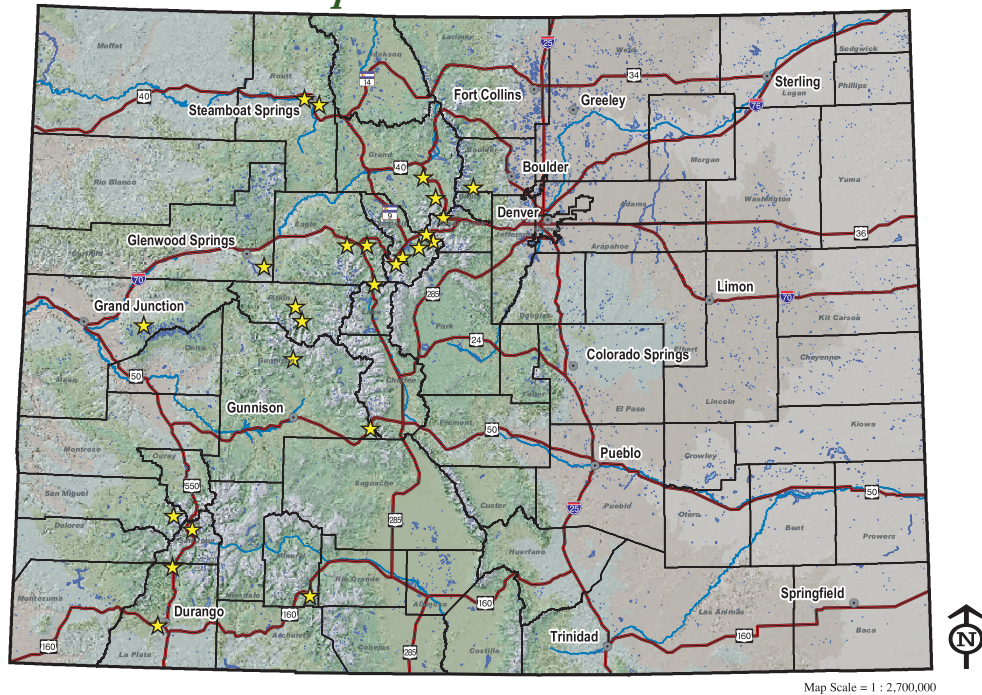
The private campground industry in Colorado appears to be static as a result of many factors (see Fig. 103). As Colorado's population increases, campgrounds that were originally on the outskirts of towns are now part of expanding metropolitan areas. Land values are increasing and campgrounds are being purchased for development. In addition, towns and municipalities do not readily approve zoning for new campgrounds due to the assumed associated noise and traffic.

As private campgrounds compete for customers, owners are targeting marketing strategies toward a specific niche such as families, "snowbirds," or campers that live for an entire season in one area.

Small camper cabins are increasingly common. Because campers can stay in cabins despite inclement weather conditions, owners are seeing an increase in the occupancy rate of these cabins. The CCLOA predicts that the number of cabins on private campgrounds will continue to increase.

Campground ownership is becoming more of a lifestyle than an income-based decision. With half of the 270 campgrounds in Colorado having 50 sites or less,

## Map 21: Colorado's Ski Areas



Source: Colorado State Parks GIS Dept., 2003.

campgrounds do not often produce substantial income for owners.

### Colorado's Ski Industry

Skiing is the second largest industry in the state behind manufacturing and a major contributor to Colorado's outdoor recreation. Over 1.6 million ski trips were taken in Colorado in 2000, contributing over \$312 million, or 60% of all recreation expenditures. Skiing is the main purpose for 8% of all outdoor trips in Colorado, according to the Longwoods International Report commissioned by the Colorado Tourism Office. Approximately 26% of ski trips were taken by Colorado residents.

The ski industry creates 25,000 jobs statewide, according to Colorado Ski Country USA.

#### Skiing in Colorado

**Total skiable acres:** 34,573

**number of lifts:** 294

**number of trails:** 2,057

**number of snowmaking acres:** 5,666

Source: Colorado Ski Country USA, 2003.

Colorado has 27 ski resorts, ranking fifth in the number of resorts in the country according to the National Ski Areas Association. With the opening of Aspen Mountain for snowboarding in April of 2001, all of Colorado's resorts now permit snowboarding. Colorado has 30 terrain parks, 20 half-pipes, and five super-pipes at Breckenridge, Buttermilk, Copper, Steamboat and Vail.

With 24 resorts, 288 lifts and nearly 2,000 trails, and the highest skiable peaks in the country, Colorado is a world class ski destination. Offering over 34,500 acres of skiing, including 15,000 acres of advanced/expert terrain, Colorado gets more skier visits than any other region, according to Colorado Ski Country USA (see Table 128). (Skier visits are the metric used to track participation in skiing and snowboarding. A skier visit represents a person skiing or snowboarding for any part of one day at a mountain resort.)

Colorado Ski Country USA is the trade association representing the largest ski state in the U.S. with its 24 member resorts contributing approximately 20% of the nation's 50 million skier visits each year.

All of Colorado's ski resorts, excluding SolVista, operate through permits from the USFS. Permits provide permission, without conveying an interest in land, to occupy and use National Forest System lands for the specific



purpose of providing Alpine or Nordic skiing opportunities to the public. These permits do not give the permittee exclusive use of the land. The Forest Service reserves the right to use, or allow others to use, any part of the permitted area for any purpose, as long as it does not interfere with the ski area operations.

**Table 128: 2002 Skier Visits**

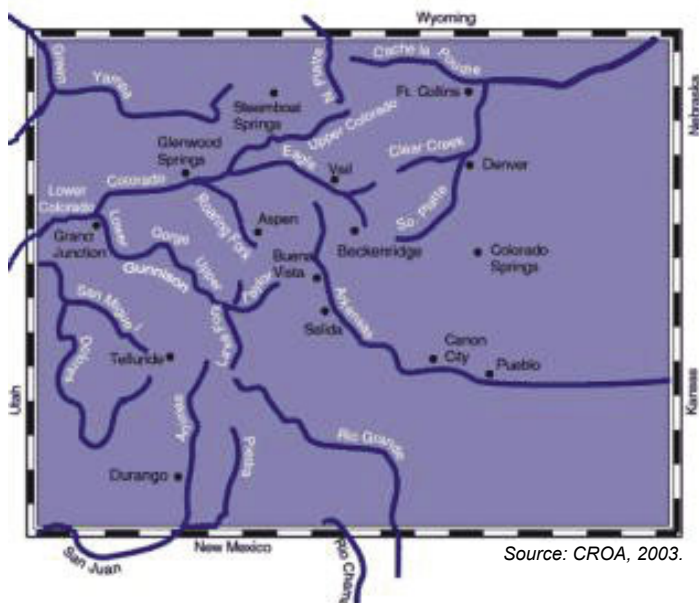
State	number of visitors
Colorado	11.5 million
California	7.4 million
Vermont	4.5 million
New York	4.1 million
Utah	3.35 million

Source: Colorado Ski Country USA, 2003.

### Whitewater Rafting

The first river outfitting began in Colorado in 1929 with Buzz Hatch on the Green River, tracing the infamous Powell expedition that launched in 1869. Since then, Colorado has become the most popular state for whitewater rafting according to the Colorado River Outfitters Association (CROA). As the largest river rafting destination in the U.S. with 13 world class river systems, Colorado offers a variety of trips appropriate has plenty of first time floaters and experienced whitewater enthusiasts.

### Map 23: Major Whitewater Rafting Rivers in Colorado



Of the 13 river systems in Colorado, the Arkansas River is Colorado's top rafting river as well as the most popular rafting river in the U.S. and around the world with more than 63 licensed rafting companies. Over 252,000 of the state's rafters visited the Arkansas River. In 2000, there were over 250,000 user days on the Arkansas, nearly half of all the user days on rivers in the entire state. (A user day is defined as one person on a half or full-day trip). Other popular rivers include the Colorado with over 128,000 user days, the Animas with over 29,000 user days, the Poudre with over 29,000 user days and the Green/Yampa rivers with over 22,000 collectively.

Colorado's whitewater rafting industry is a \$125 million business annually, according to CROA. Over 523,000 people took commercial river rafting trips in Colorado in the 2001 season, an increase of 0.8% from 2000. In 2000, there were more than 519,000 industry rafting user days.

Members of CROA guide the vast majority of the rafting participants in Colorado. Representing 58 licensed outfitters in Colorado, CROA serves to identify, provide support and a united voice for state river conservation issues as well as promote safe whitewater boating practices for commercial and private river rafters. CROA operates an industry web site for consumers and also compiles economic impact data and statistics about the industry. Members must be licensed by the State of Colorado. In addition, CROA requests that each member respect the association's code of ethics including a stated commitment to safety, water and natural resource conservation and professional conduct.

To ensure customer safety and to minimize resource impacts, river outfitting in Colorado is subject to state and federal agency use permit programs. In order to take a commercial passenger river rafting in Colorado, a river outfitter must be licensed by the state of Colorado. In addition to holding a license issued by the State Parks, a river outfitter may, depending on the river system, hold permits with the NPS, BLM and the USFS.

These federal and state agencies operate based on river management plans which address capacity and permitting. Some river plans allow only a few visitors a day to travel through pristine wilderness areas, while other plans offer easier access.



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## NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Colorado depends on the substantial initiative of a diverse and active non-profit community to provide outdoor recreation resources and programs. In addition to the major organizations described below, numerous smaller, community-based non-profits actively engage Coloradans and their visitors in the outdoors.

### *Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC)*

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) is recognized as a statewide leader in promoting and coordinating Coloradans engagement in outdoor volunteerism. Established in 1984, VOC is dedicated to promoting and fostering a sense of personal responsibility for Colorado's public lands among its citizens and visitors.

Since 1984, VOC has worked with more than 40,000 Coloradans to complete 171 conservation projects worth in excess of \$8 million. VOC volunteers have built hundreds of miles of trails and planted thousands of trees across Colorado, from Denver's urban parks to the summits of Fourteeners. Volunteers have experienced a deep sense of accomplishment and developed a heightened understanding of resource stewardship.

VOC focuses its work on four primary program areas: projects, clearinghouse, trainings, and youth.

- **VOC Projects:** VOC hosts volunteer projects throughout the state in partnership with land management agencies and other non-profit organizations to build and repair trails, plant trees, construct whole-access facilities, improve wildlife habitats, and restore wetlands.
- **The VOC Network:** VOC manages the VOC Network, a clearinghouse which connects individuals and groups with environmental and natural resource volunteer opportunities and internships throughout Colorado.
- **"Extending Your Reach" Training Workshops:** VOC offers several different training workshops to land management agencies, nonprofit organizations, user groups or other interested participants.
- **VOC Youth Program:** Established in 1996, VOC's Youth Program seeks to empower young people to become active stewards of their public lands and provides them with opportunities to protect, enhance and learn about the natural worlds.

During 2001-02, VOC and a number of public and private partners developed a *Blueprint for Outdoor Stewardship* to significantly increase the levels of volunteer participation and greatly enhance the collective capacity to recruit, train, and deploy volunteers for land stewardship projects throughout Colorado.

### *Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA)*

Launched as an initiative in 1997 by Great Outdoors Colorado and a number of private funders, CYCA develops and maintains a network of locally operating youth conservation corps programs that work to preserve and enhance the environment. Using the youth service corps model to respond the growing conservation and stewardship needs of Colorado's natural resources, CYCA engages youth in lifelong outdoors learning experiences while accomplishing significant construction and maintenance services on trail, park facility and habitat stewardship projects.

Under CYCA's leadership, the number of independent, locally operating youth corps has doubled from the original five community-based programs primarily serving Front Range youth, with the addition of new programs serving the West Slope, San Luis Valley, Southwestern Colorado and the Eastern Plains. The number of youth served has tripled, with over 600 youth participating during 2002.

A broad range of agencies contract youth corps for conservation projects, including community parks and recreation agencies, Colorado State Parks, Division of Wildlife, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Continental Divide Trail Alliance, Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition, and land trusts.

### *Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE)*

The Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) facilitates communication, cooperation, collaboration, and coordination among the varied environmental education programs in the state. CAEE was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit in 1989 to serve the shared interests of public agencies, businesses, teachers, community organizations and individuals distributing and using EE materials and programs. It is a neutral and objective source of information related to EE in Colorado, and a voice for EE's important role in the balance between societal needs and environmental quality.

CAEE is growing with over 600 members from across Colorado. Members include teachers, students, informal educators, public agency employees, retirees, and many more.

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The organization is managed by two full time employees and a Board with seven members. Other input to the organization is provided via an advisory council and regional networks within the state.

**Some of the primary goals of the organization include development or improvement of:**

- Community-based EE network development
- Curriculum content standards correlations
- Environmental Literacy assessment
- Database project providing on-line information on program opportunities to the public statewide
- Annual statewide EE workshop
- Monthly bulletin - Information Clearinghouse
- Annual awards and recognition program
- Partnership Development: Outreach to business, agriculture, minority, religious communities, and EE stakeholder organizations

***Outward Bound West  
(formerly Colorado Outward Bound School)***

Outward Bound West is the largest provider of wilderness based education in the country and is headquartered in Golden, Colorado at the American Mountaineering Center. In January 2003, the Colorado Outward Bound School merged with the Pacific Crest Outward Bound School to become Outward Bound West. The mission of Outward Bound West is to “inspire and develop leadership, compassion, responsibility, respect for the environment and commitment to serve through adventure-based wilderness experiences led by the most skilled, safety-conscious staff.” Outward Bound West achieves its mission through expeditionary courses serving youth, adults, community groups, and corporate teams.

As a means of executing the school’s mission, Outward Bound West has access to and advocates for quality wilderness classrooms on federal, state, and private lands throughout Colorado and the western United States. Outward Bound West also partners with conservation organizations such as the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, and public land agencies to promote environmental and social responsibility through trail maintenance, restoration and community based volunteer projects throughout the state. Each year, Outward Bound West students and staff donate hundreds of volunteer days to public lands in Colorado.

***Rocky Mountain Field Institute***

The Rocky Mountain Field Institute, a nonprofit organization based in Colorado Springs, is dedicated to the preservation and restoration of wildlands and key natural areas through exemplary environmental service, research, and education. Education is a key component of all RMFI programs; RMFI is devoted to promoting greater understanding of the unique natural attributes of the areas where it works.

RMFI works at select locations within the Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau Region where critical environmental preservation and restoration action is needed. RMFI’s environmental service opportunities range from one-day programs to extended internships like the 28-day Earth Corps program. RMFI has provided the leadership for a number of important trails and recreational management initiatives including the Colorado 14ers Initiative, the Eldorado Canyon Trails Project, and the Shelf Road and Penitente Canyon Site Development Projects.

***Colorado Fourteeners Initiative (CFI)***

Formed in 1994, the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative (CFI) is a partnership of nonprofit organizations, concerned individuals, and public agencies to protect and preserve the natural integrity of Colorado’s Fourteeners and the quality of the recreational opportunities they provide. Colorado’s 54 14,000 foot peaks are emblematic of Colorado’s high country. Each year hundreds of thousands of hikers attempt to climb or hike one or more of these peaks. While many of the more remote peaks and routes remain relatively pristine, high use on popular peaks and routes is causing severe erosion and negative impacts to water, wildlife, and vegetation.

CFI conducts Trail and Restoration Projects on Fourteeners to create and/or delineate sustainable routes on the peaks, and restore past impacts. Volunteers are a vital part of these efforts.

Peak Stewards hike Fourteeners to collect information and when appropriate, contact other visitors to promote Wilderness awareness and Leave No Trace practices. Peak Stewards “Hike with a Purpose.”

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## *Long Distance Trail Organizations*

Colorado is actively engaged in creating long distance trail routes linking communities and public lands. In response to the challenges inherent in funding, planning, building and maintaining long distance trails that cross community and agency boundaries, a number of non-profit organizations have been established. Among the leaders in these initiatives are:

- The **Colorado Trail Foundation** builds and maintains the 500-mile Colorado Trail from Denver to Durango through volunteers. In addition, the Foundation provides educational and environmental classes and has organized fully supported Trail Treks for 11 years.
- The **Continental Divide Trail Alliance** is headquartered in Colorado, yet focuses on “The King of Trails,” the 3,100 mile National Scenic Trail along America’s backbone from Canada to Mexico. CDTA is comprised of individuals, clubs and businesses who build, improve and protect hundreds of miles of trail each year. Volunteers and youth corps are recruited to work on the 760 miles of the trail in Colorado.
- The **Platte River Greenway Foundation** has long been on the cutting edge of transforming neglected stream corridors into valued community greenway amenities. Since 1974, the Foundation has leveraged \$60 million into the restoration of the South Platte and Cherry Creek corridors through Denver Metro communities. The Foundation engages in recreation and riparian improvements, youth education and employment programs, and family oriented special events such as concerts at the confluence of the S. Platte River and Cherry Creek in the heart of Denver.
- The **Sand Creek Regional Greenway** focuses on 13 miles of the Sand Creek Corridor from Aurora through Commerce City to Denver, forming a critical northeast corridor link in the inter-connected Metro Denver area trail system.
- **Poudre River Trail, Inc.** is dedicated to building and maintaining the 35 miles of trails being developed through communities from Ft. Collins to Greeley to the river’s confluence with the S. Platte River.
- The **Riverfront Commission** spearheads the extensive system of trails, local and state parks along the Colorado River from DeBeque Canyon to Fruita.

- The **Historic Arkansas River Project** heads the multi-million dollar project to transform the Arkansas River through Pueblo into a major community center and economic development engine.

## *Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO)*

COHVCO represents, assists, educates and empowers OHV recreationists in the protection and promotion of off-highway motorized recreation throughout Colorado. The 52 member organization is comprised of community based OHV and snowmobile enthusiasts and promotes the responsible use and conservation of out public lands and natural resources.

COHVCO works closely with the Colorado State Parks Off-Highway Vehicle Program in developing and funding projects to fund trail maintenance and construction, trailheads, parking areas, trail signs and maps. Important educational programs such as employment of youth conservation corps and a media-based Responsible Use Campaign are COHVCO initiatives.

## *Colorado Mountain Club (CMC)*

The Colorado Mountain Club’s mission is to “Unite the energy, interest, and knowledge of the students, explorers, and lovers of the mountains of Colorado.” CMC organizes over 3,000 activities in Colorado’s mountains each year, centered on its well-known outings programs. Members are offered a wide variety of other activities including conservation advocacy programs, outdoor education and mountaineering schools for adults, youth and families, publications, access to the largest mountaineering library in the western hemisphere in cooperation with the American Alpine Club, natural history programs and social activities.

CMC’s conservation program is focused on protecting Rocky Mountain habitats and ecosystems and on advocating for responsible recreation and appropriate use of public lands. CMC works to provide land managers with scientific information on alpine ecology and recreational impacts on natural resources, encourages science-based decision making in land management, and facilitates communication between diverse recreation and user groups, land managers and commercial interests.

## *Bicycle Colorado*

Bicycle Colorado is a statewide coalition of individuals, organizations and bicycle relate businesses who promote and encourage bicycling, bicycle safety, improve conditions and provide a voice for cyclists in Colorado.

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Bicycle Colorado pushes for wider shoulders on highways and more off-street paths, represents bicycling interests in legislative forums, and works with local groups to keep trails open for mountain bikers. It collaborates on statewide issues with the Colorado Department of Transportation and Colorado State Parks.

### *International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA)*

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) is headquartered in Boulder, Colorado. It creates, enhances and preserves trail opportunities for mountain bikers worldwide. IMBA is regarded as the premier resource for Colorado recreation agencies to plan, build and maintain trail networks for mountain bike use. Principal projects include the Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew, the National Mountain Bike Patrol, Trailbuilding Schools, Sprockids clubs for youth, Epic Rides and a Trail Solutions Program.

### *Horse Organizations*

- **The Colorado Horse Council (CoHoCo)** engages a substantial network of community horse organizations in monitoring state and local activity regarding the use of equines on public land. These organizations are the leading advocates for inclusion of equine trails in community, regional, and public lands trail systems.
- The programs funded by the **Colorado Horse Development Authority (CHDA)** are designed to stimulate, by research, education, advertising, and other methods, Colorado's multi-billion dollar horse industry. According to the CHDA:
  - Colorado has over 194,000 horses.
  - There are nearly 65,000 horse owners in Colorado
  - Colorado's horse industry has the impact of 7,000 fulltime equivalent jobs. Spending by suppliers and employees generates additional jobs in Colorado for a total employment impact of 30,800.
  - Colorado's horse industry produces goods and services valued at \$754 million.
- **Colorado Backcountry Horsemen**, a member of the Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA), is a service organization working in the back country and educating back country users. Donated volunteer hours on trail maintenance and repair work for 2002 totaled over 3,500

hours. The BCHCO contributes to the trail use of diversified recreational groups including hikers, bicyclists, ATV riders, and equestrians.

- Colorado has an increasing number of regional and county horse associations and riding clubs including the **Boulder County Horse Association**, the largest county horse association in Colorado.

### *Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts*

Colorado is characterized by a statewide, pro-active group of local, regional and nationally based land trusts. The Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts was established in 1991 as an umbrella organization by a group of conservation practitioners and land trust executive directors desiring one voice for the land conservation community. CCLT's primary focus is to influence public policy, increase awareness to support private land conservation, and promote land conservation excellence.

CCLT has worked with land conservation organizations to protect over 720,000 acres of land. In Colorado, 39 land trusts operate in 41 counties; 32 trusts serve local communities and seven others are regionally or nationally based. Land trusts are non-profit organizations that work with landowners to voluntarily conserve open lands through a variety of tools:

- Acquisition (by donation or purchase) of conservation easements, deed restrictions and fee title to land.
- Development of management agreements
- Strategic estate planning

Some land trusts will acquire land in fee title, but then turn it over through donation or sale to a local, state or federal agency for management and stewardship.

### *Regional and National Land Trusts*

Strong efforts by regional and national land trusts have conserved over 645,000 acres of land in Colorado:

- **The Colorado Conservation Trust** was created in 2001 to work with citizens, private foundations, non-profits and public agencies by fostering leadership, developing strategic initiatives and increasing investments in conservation. A CCT survey found that more than \$1.6 billion will be needed over the next five years to protect approximately 1.6 million



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acres of land targeted for protection, and that current funding sources can fund less than one-third of that amount.

- **Colorado Open Lands** has protected over 40,000 acres through collaborative approaches to land conservation. COL has been especially active in recent years in the South Park area conserving agricultural lands and wetlands.
- **The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust** was established specifically to serve the agricultural community through conservation easements designed to enable farmers and ranchers to protect their lands and to facilitate the inter-generational transfer of productive lands. Over 115,500 productive agricultural acres have been protected.
- **The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation** works on habitat enhancement, wildlife management, research, conservation education and land acquisition projects for wildlife conservation. In Colorado, it has helped protect over 98,000 acres.
- **The Conservation Fund** develops partnerships to preserve wildlife habitat, working landscapes and community open space. In Colorado, The Conservation Fund led the efforts to protect the 21,000 acre Greenland Ranch along I-25 in Douglas County. This \$70 million project represents Colorado's largest land conservation project ever in financial terms. The organization has also assisted Colorado State Parks and Division of Wildlife in important park and wildlife area acquisitions.
- **The Nature Conservancy** focuses on the protection of land and waters to preserve targeted plant, animal and natural community habitats. TNC has protected more than 437,000 acres of critical natural lands in Colorado, most recently in leading efforts to preserve the 97,000 acre Baca Ranch adjacent to Great Sand Dunes National Park with LWCF assistance. TNC is currently embarking on a Heart of the West campaign to raise \$75 million to preserve over a half million acres for Colorado's imperiled species.
- **The Trust for Public Land** works to protect land for human enjoyment and to improve the health and quality of life for American communities. In Colorado, TPL has protected over 56,000 acres. In recent years, TPL has been especially active in the

Pikes Peak region, the Wet Mountain Valley, and the Red Mountain mining district near Ouray and Silverton where LWCF is helping to protect a targeted 11,000 acres.

- **The Wilderness Land Trust** targets the acquisition of inholdings in designated Wilderness Areas for eventual transfer to federal land management agencies. Over 5,000 acres have been acquired in Colorado.

### *Environmental and Wildlife Advocacy Organizations*

Environmental advocacy organizations are active in communities statewide. Regional and nationally based organizations include:

- **The Audubon Society** – 11 chapters statewide focused on wildlife enjoyment and conservation.
- **Colorado Trout Unlimited** – 19 chapters statewide which raise funds and provide labor for stream restoration and improvement, native trout recovery, whirling disease recovery and youth education projects.
- **Colorado Wildlife Federation** – 5,000 members focused on the conservation, sound management and sustainable use of Colorado's wildlife and wildlife habitat through education and advocacy.
- **The Sierra Club** – 13 groups statewide focused on outings and a range of conservation advocacy projects.
- **The Wilderness Society** - Colorado hosts one of seven national regional offices, focused on wilderness designation and management practices.
- **The Colorado Environmental Coalition** – an umbrella organization that partners with numerous community, regional and national groups focused on the conservation of wild lands, wildlife and quality of life.
- **Western Colorado Congress** – an umbrella organization for seven West Slope community based conservation groups focused on creating healthy, sustainable communities, social and economic justice, and environmental stewardship.
- **Western Resource Advocates (formerly The Land and Water Fund of the Rockies)**: a non-profit environmental law and policy organization dedicated to restoring and protecting the natural environment of the Interior American West focusing on energy, water, and lands.