

## CHAPTER 5: STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN

As Coloradans, our heritage is centered on our connections to the spectacular landscapes that define our state. As highlighted by Governor Owens' Commission on Saving Open Spaces, Farms and Ranches, "Coloradans place tremendous value on their open spaces, farms and ranches. These undeveloped lands are the places where wildlife lives, vegetation flourishes, water and air are clean, and vistas are beautiful. Open space is essential to the state's quality of life. It is, in fact, one of the principal reasons Coloradans decide to make this place their home."

Just as significant for Coloradans are the active and passive forms of outdoor recreation in which they love to take part – 94% of the population engages in some form of outdoor recreation. *Colorado State Parks Market Assessment Study, 2002* Colorado's pro-active open space protection efforts provide the venues where the full range of Colorado's outdoor recreation attractions are enabled to flourish for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

Not only do these unique landscapes define our communities and our quality of life, but also they are a cornerstone supporting our economy, particularly the tourism industry that has emerged as our second largest economic sector.

Yet today Colorado faces a substantial challenge in satisfying the outdoor recreation demands of a rapidly expanding population, while meeting the responsibility to conserve the special outdoors resources for which Colorado is renowned.

Millions of visitors continue to enjoy a wide diversity of outdoor recreation activities, yet recreation management agencies across the community, state and federal spectrum report difficulty keeping up with public expectations for quality outdoors experiences.

In recognition of those challenges, the multi-interest Strategic Issues Steering Group convened for the *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* planning process early on stressed the importance of creating an effective statewide strategic plan. This group of outdoor recreation leaders recognized the *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* plan as an ideal opportunity to focus public attention on outdoor recreation's key role in Colorado's economy and quality of life, and to more pro-actively adopt comprehensive strategies that respond to the challenges of retaining Colorado's reputation for world class recreation experiences.

**Throughout the Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future process, the Strategic Issues Steering Group's work focused on two types of issues:**

- The social, economic and environmental backdrop that establishes the context to which strategic actions must respond.
- Strategic actions which emerged as issues of common concern which can be pursued by outdoor recreation agencies and their tourism industry and community partners.

### *Social Economic and Environmental Backdrop:*

**As outlined in Chapter 2, a wide range of trends and influences comprise the backdrop to which a strategic plan must respond:**

1. *Trends in the ways Coloradans and our visitors choose to enjoy the outdoors.* Polling indicates that 94% of the population participates in outdoor recreation, and that participation rates are increasing faster than the rate of population growth. As outdoors enthusiasts' preferences for specific types of recreation expand and shift over time, recreation providers must find ways to meet those expectations while still recognizing the capacity of outdoors resources to support those activities.
2. *Demographic trends of population growth.* Many of Colorado's communities are among the fastest growing in the United States. Traditional use areas and wildland recreation landscapes are now "just out the back door" for many historically rural, but now urban communities. By 2002, Colorado's population grew to 4.52 million, an increase of 37% from the 1990 population of 3.3 million. By 2025, the State Demographer projects Colorado's population to grow by another 47% to 6.65 million. Trends in population growth and changes in the demographic, social and economic characteristics of our communities must be factored into recreation site planning and investments.
3. *The nexus of tourism and outdoor recreation.* The tourism industry has continued to rise in prominence to Colorado's second-largest industry behind agriculture. Tourism generates more than \$7 billion a year in spending and contributes more than \$550 million to state and local tax coffers every year.

according to the Colorado Tourism Office. The vibrant tourism industry is closely tied to Colorado's unique outdoors appeal and it is incumbent on tourism industry operators and public agency managers to work together as managing partners.

4. *Strong open space protection efforts statewide.* In December 2000, the Governor's Commission on Saving Open Spaces, Farms and Ranches published findings affirming the strong open space protection efforts that characterize Colorado. State lawmakers passed some of the most innovative conservation incentives in the country; voters in many communities approved the use of taxpayer funds for open space, trails and outdoor recreation projects; and voters amended the state constitution to require lottery proceeds be used for open space, parks and wildlife. A natural alliance among open space advocates and recreation agencies can help leverage financial resources.
5. *Recreation access.* Several factors affect recreationists as they travel to and from popular recreation attractions. Colorado's roadway capacity is challenged by dramatic increases in traffic volumes that can lead to congestion, particularly during weekends when highway systems are most in demand by recreationists. Public land managers address the capacity of public lands to accommodate recreation demand through increasingly high profile travel management plans that attempt to balance the range of motorized and non-motorized recreation uses of the land. Rights to access public lands and river recreation sites are subject to evolving interpretations and changes of state and federal laws.
6. *Unprecedented environmental conditions.* Environmental stresses of unusual magnitude have contributed to the challenge of sustaining our outdoors heritage. These include a four year period of drought-like conditions, forests threatened by wildfires and bark beetle infestations, and fish and wildlife populations stressed by an unprecedented succession of diseases.
7. *A statewide economic slowdown.* Mirroring the national economy, the economic slowdown of 2002 has affected tax bases and the tourism industry, dampening the capability to invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure, resource stewardship and visitor management.

### ***Strategic Actions:***

**This backdrop of social, economic and environmental influences calls for innovative approaches in providing the outdoors experiences people desire while meeting resource conservation goals. The Strategic Issues Steering Group discussions focused on four types of approaches:**

1. Delivering the outdoors experiences that people want;
2. Closer ties between the tourism industry, community leaders and public recreation agency managers;
3. Engagement of host communities in the stewardship of public lands and resources; and
4. Pooling resources to finance capital improvements and to manage outdoor recreation sites

The Strategic Issues Steering Group noted that already, Colorado's public recreation agencies, non-profits and the private sector have a record of creatively approaching these challenges.

#### ***1. Delivering valued visitor experiences consistent with host community and environmental goals***

The first promoters of tourism realized that the beauty, clean air and water made Colorado a natural escape from the crowded, industrialized Eastern Seaboard cities. It was a special place where visitors could "gallop across the country, with neither a fence or a ditch to hinder one's progress, stir the dormant blood, bring a flush to the pale cheek, and force forgetfulness of the world, and its trials." (Edward Roberts 1880s)

The entire public recreation movement in the U.S. grew out of a concern for citizens' well being. For people subjected to workplace stress, city life, and other pressures of an emerging industrial age, public recreation sites produced enjoyable experiences, relieved stress, and improved people's lives. The public invested in recreation because it was in the public interest, contributing to enriched family life and stabilized communities socially and economically.

Since then millions have made Colorado their home because they identify with the distinctive character of their parklands and wildlands as a lifestyle matter. Agencies charged with recreation and resource management need to understand what makes up its citizens' quality of life and how they can contribute

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to protecting and improving it. Outdoor recreation benefits sought by visitors to recreation sites and by communities hosting these visitors should direct decisions in determining public investments in our outdoors infrastructure and programs. Managing for beneficial outcomes includes:

- Developing explicitly stated management objectives based on an assessment of preferred visitor experiences. Just as importantly, beneficial outcomes preferred by these visitors and by affected residents for their host communities and the environment, including quality of life and economic well-being, must also be taken into account.
- Prescribing the recreation setting conditions that are essential to producing the outcomes preferred by visitors and host communities. Settings define recreation sites, give structure to accompanying service delivery systems, and help determine the types of recreation opportunities produced. All management and visitor service actions affect the character of the settings, defined by their physical capacity and by their social and administrative attributes.
- Formulating the necessary set of management, marketing and monitoring actions required to establish or maintain those settings.

## **2. *Closer ties between the tourism industry, community leaders and public recreation agency managers***

- As a result of lessons learned from the 2002 wildfires, the Colorado Tourism Office is leading an effort to develop a coordinated communications protocol designed to give outdoors enthusiasts accurate and timely information about areas both affected and not affected by wildfires.
- The Colorado Visitors Guide will begin to feature additional information about recreation agency contact centers.
- The Denver Convention and Visitors Bureau is responding to cultural tourism as the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry by creating opportunities to expand the creative

dialogue between the travel and tourism industry, cultural institutions and natural resource agencies.

- In recognition of the need to encourage the working partnership between tourist related business operators, local government officials and public agency recreation managers, the annual Tourism Conference in October 2003 included a special focus on tourism and the outdoors.
- The Center for Business and Economic Forecasting, Inc. has partnered with the Demography Section of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) in its Local Economic Impact Forecast Assistance (LEIFA) program, CTO and federal agency planners to research the economic aspects of tourism and its outdoor recreation components.

## **3. *Community engagement in the stewardship of public lands and resources***

- Citizens have voted to dedicate special taxes for park and open space protection, especially in high growth areas such as Jefferson, Douglas, El Paso, Boulder, Adams, Pitkin and Larimer Counties.
- The *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* survey of local governments indicates that the municipal, county and special district agencies who responded manage 375,400 acres that have been protected as parks and open space areas.
- Non-profit land trusts have emerged to focus on community, ranch and farm land protection priorities, mostly through conservation easements which give landowners tax benefits for limiting development. In Colorado, 32 local land trusts and 7 regional or national land trusts have worked extensively with landowners to voluntarily conserve open lands. A poll by the Colorado Conservation Trust revealed that Colorado currently has 720,000 acres of land protected by non-profit land conservation organizations and local governments.
- The Division of Wildlife and GOCO have leveraged federal funds to partner with landowners and non-profits to initiate a Colorado Species Conservation Partnership featuring a comprehensive package of land conservation tools targeting at-risk species.

- Since 1997, community youth conservation corps, in cooperation with the Colorado Youth Corps Association, have tripled from five programs serving 210 Front Range youth to ten operations statewide, serving over 620 youth.
- In its *Blueprint for Outdoors Stewardship*, Volunteers for Outdoors Colorado notes that 47 volunteer programs statewide estimate 36,000 volunteers work on projects statewide and that 52% of state and federal land managers engage volunteer help at least once a month.

#### 4. *Pooling resources to finance capital improvements and to manage outdoor recreation sites*

##### **Already, Colorado has a strong track record in this approach:**

- Colorado State Parks and the Division of Wildlife have leveraged their resources to attract federal agency matching funds for facility renovation and habitat protection.
- Coloradans voted to create the state lottery, proceeds of which go to the Parks, the Conservation Trust Fund and Great Outdoors Colorado. Approximately \$90 million annually funds parks, trails wildlife habitat, open space and wildlife grants.
- Regional, multi-interest partnerships which pool public and private resources to realize community visions have sprung up in Grand Junction, the Yampa River Valley, Gunnison County, all of the major Front Range cities, and other locations statewide.
- Federal agencies have sought efficiencies of scale by consolidating operations, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management joint management structure in southwest Colorado.

The Strategic Issues Steering Group's discussions on the four types of approaches outlined above focused on the identification of the key strategic issues that can best respond to securing Colorado's outdoor recreation future. Those issues are described, along with the action frameworks identified by the group to address them, in the section that follows.

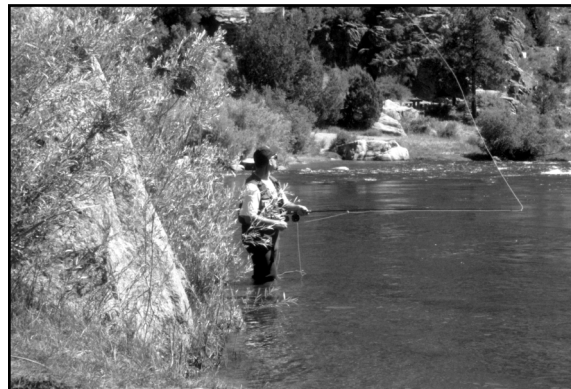
### *A Collaborative Regional Forums Strategy*

The strategic issues and action frameworks described in the section that follows were developed by ad hoc work groups comprised of stakeholders knowledgeable about the nature of those issues. A significant common thread emerged from the action framework discussions that focused on the most effective means of addressing those issues. Further discussion led to the **primary recommendation** of the Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future strategic planning effort: **Regional forums should be convened to develop collaborative strategies among communities, public agencies, the private sector and non-profits.**

The consensus among the stakeholders is that issues can best be addressed at the regional level among communities with common interests, tourism business operators, non-profit organizations, and the public lands managers responsible for delivering the outdoors experiences visitors are looking for.

#### **The stakeholders agreed that the collaborative strategies should focus on:**

- Parks, trails, open space and wildlife habitat stewardship planning, facilities development and management strategies
- Transportation planning and funding for access to recreation sites
- Public information and marketing responsive to visitor preferences
- Education, volunteer and youth outreach programs
- Cultural sites stewardship and heritage tourism
- Cooperative investment strategies





**The Steering Group further recommended that two pilot forums be initiated as the most effective means to develop models for subsequent efforts statewide.** Envisioned were one pilot project on the West Slope and one along a segment of the Front Range, deploying techniques best adaptable to each region's unique set of characteristics and prior planning efforts. Participants in these roundtable forums should be comprised of a broad range of stakeholders who can best articulate integrated strategies to sustain the region's outdoors heritage.

Dr. Glenn Haas of Colorado State University's College of Natural Resources has developed a similar concept known as Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) cooperatives. Much like the recommended regional forums, the regional cooperatives envisioned by the PROS concept would be united voluntarily to achieve through collaboration what cannot be achieved through individual and independent action. The advantages of the regional scale approach are summarized as:

- A broad range of recreation diversity best provided from a range of private sector, non-profit, and local, state and federal agency sources can be considered.
- The entire range of recreation site visitors, including local residents to visitors from within and out of state, can be considered.
- Connectivity among recreation sites, heritage and cultural sites, communities, and privately and publicly owned open lands can be considered.
- Collaboration leads to better articulation of agency niches, discouraging duplication of efforts while identifying gaps in services and conservation sites.
- An increase in visitor capacity can be accommodated by best matching visitor preferences with the recreation sites best suited to meet those needs.
- At-risk recreation and species conservation opportunities can be better addressed. Existing social and political values and structures can be better incorporated into planning and decision-making.

The regional forums will focus on the collaborative strategies most responsive to that region's special characteristics. The Colorado's Outdoor Recreation

Future Strategic Issues Steering Group did not identify specific regional boundaries, recognizing that local residents and policy makers are better qualified to make those decisions. The Steering Group did develop several general parameters that should characterize regional forums:

- The regions should be functionally based on market areas or culturally and historically aligned areas.
- Each forum must identify and set its own priorities, based on its own unique character.
- Efficient and coordinated delivery of services that yield customer satisfaction ought to be a key element of any region, focused on specific projects such as marketing, regional trails and greenways systems, shared services, or regionally based GIS systems of data collection and display.
- A forum might be conducted in cooperation with an existing association or established region such as a regional council of government or a state tourism region, or might be a new association.
- Seed money to initiate the forums should be made available, potentially a portion of Colorado's stateside LWCF allocations.

**The PROS concept articulates the possible points of regional connections that forums could focus upon:**

#### **Planning Connections:**

- Scoping planning processes
- Demand/supply analyses
- Definition of agency niches
- Benefits and sense of place analyses
- Resource inventories
- Recreation and resource gap analyses
- Facility design and location

#### **Management Connections:**

- Rules and regulations consistency
- Visitor and resource management
- Visitor capacities
- Shared operation and maintenance opportunities
- Training
- Volunteer programs
- Law enforcement
- Scheduling staff, closures events and programs
- Fees and charges

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### Physical Connections:

- Park lands, open lands and forest preserves
- Recreation related businesses
- Trails, rivers and byways
- Facilities and utilities
- Biologic/geologic corridors
- Cultural and historic resources

### Information Connections:

- Regional tourism marketing
- Interpretive and outdoor education programs
- K-12 and higher education programs
- Public education campaigns
- Multi-agency visitor centers
- Internet sites
- Real-time use and capacity information
- Data collection and storage
- Multi-agency GIS, mapping and satellite imagery

### Financial Connections:

- Grants and donations
- Fund-raising
- Entrepreneurial enterprises
- Cost sharing
- Financial accounting/management

### Research Connections:

- Natural and social science
- Resource, visitor and administrative monitoring
- Community and regional surveys
- Coordinated schedules, protocols, field sites

The stakeholders invited to participate in the forums should include:

- Policy makers – local, state and federal elected officials, planning commissions, regional government associations
- Landowners – recognized community leaders
- Public agency land managers – local, state and federal parks, open space, wildlife and public lands executives
- Resource specialists – experts in real estate, water resources, wildlife, rangeland, forestry, historic preservation, archaeology, earth sciences, ecology
- Chambers of Commerce and economic development officials

- Tourism industry business leaders
- Non-profit land conservation organizations, including local and nationally based land trusts
- Great Outdoors Colorado and the foundation community
- Water supply agencies
- Recreationists – representatives from organizations as well as the general public
- Outdoor industry retailers
- Outdoor industry associations such as Colorado Ski Country USA, International Mountain Bike Association, Outdoor Industry Association
- Non-profit organizations such as Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, Leave No Trace, Continental Divide Trail Association, Colorado Youth Corps Association, Colorado Mountain Club and Colorado Off-highway Vehicle Coalition
- Outdoor education providers, including public and private schools, higher education institutions and non-profits
- Public information specialists from the private and public sectors
- Additional public agency representatives such as Department of Local Affairs regional staff, Colorado Department of Transportation

### *Issue Descriptions and Action Frameworks*

The Strategic Issues Steering Group identified six issues of statewide significance that Colorado must address to most effectively meet the challenge of satisfying the outdoor recreation demands of a rapidly expanding population, while meeting the responsibility to conserve the special outdoors resources for which Colorado is renowned. While these issues are common to all regions of the state, the action frameworks that the group recommends to address the issues are best adapted to the specific character of Colorado's distinctive and diverse regions and their residents.

1. Colorado's citizens and visitors need more effective ways to access the wide array of information about recreation sites and their host communities, and outdoor recreation providers

need to better integrate outdoor recreation marketing and management to sustain the outstanding recreation attractions, its economic vitality, and resulting quality of life.

2. Communities must invest in outdoor infrastructure through well planned, on-going commitments to meeting a growing population's expectations for a wide range of safe, up-to-date sites to enjoy the outdoors.
3. Public recreation agencies faced with tight budgets yet increasing demand for recreation services are considering increased reliance on fees and creative public/private partnerships to enhance public services.
4. The sustainability of natural and cultural landscapes and our capability to be stewards of those resources must be considered when agencies and communities plan for and manage the location and scope of outdoor recreation activities.
5. Public access to outdoor sites and management of travel on public lands is challenged by the capacity of our statewide transportation infrastructure and of our natural resources to accommodate the volume of demand.
6. Recreation agencies can more effectively engage Colorado's citizens and visitors in resource stewardship responsibilities through youth outreach and volunteer programs.

### **Issue One:**

*Colorado's citizens and visitors need more effective ways to access the wide array of information about recreation sites and their host communities, and outdoor recreation providers need to better integrate outdoor recreation marketing and management to sustain the outstanding recreation attractions, its economic vitality, and resulting quality of life.*

### **Issue Description:**

Coloradans are renowned for their love of the outdoors and many residents and visitors come to Colorado because of the unmatched quality of our

spectacular outdoors landscapes. A wide variety of public land managers, non-profits and businesses are involved in delivery of outdoors information to community residents and visitors. Yet significant gaps exist in effectively delivering to our citizens and visitors the information they seek about recreation sites. Combined with the pressures of a growing population on a finite outdoors resource base, these gaps can result in inappropriate and excessive use of some resources. All three of these issues – information access, youth outreach and volunteerism – can be addressed through three types of strategies:

- Collaborative planning
- Integrating information resources
- Targeted delivery of information

**Goal:** Increase public awareness of Colorado's outdoor recreation opportunities and encourage responsible public participation in the enjoyment and protection of its natural resources through improved and more integrated visitor information and marketing.

### **Objectives and Action Frameworks:**

- A. Establish efficient and user friendly means for citizens and visitors to access sources of information about recreation sites and activities.

#### **Actions:**

- Establish a central website as a clearinghouse for outdoors recreation with links to the range of outdoor agencies, businesses and organizations. Focus on recreation activities rather than agencies as the initial reference point. Use Colorado.Com as the initial public access site for outdoor recreation.
  - Develop a comprehensive outdoor recreation industry relations plan in cooperation with the Colorado Tourism Office. Include media relations and marketing plans.
  - Focus on responsible use, such as the Leave No Trace approach as a central message in information provided.
- B. Collaboratively engage the tourism industry and Colorado's outdoor recreation public agencies as managing partners in marketing outdoors attractions with a view towards sustaining interdependent distinctive character of these resources and the economic vitality of the industry.

### Actions:

- Establish an outdoor recreation network with the Colorado Tourism Office, consisting of representatives from each of the state's principal outdoor recreation providers and the CTO's Outdoor Recreation board member representative.
- Add message content to appropriate marketing pieces describing the diversity of Colorado's outdoors attractions, emphasizing setting diversity and the consequent diversity of recreation experiences available.
- Develop appropriate user ethics marketing message content to cultivate resource and community stewardship, promote responsible personal and social group ethics and promote visitor safety.

### Issue Two:

*Communities must invest in outdoor infrastructure through well planned, on-going commitments to meeting a growing population's expectations for a wide range of safe, up-to-date sites to enjoy the outdoors.*

### Issue Description:

Colorado's 398 local government agencies charged with providing and managing outdoor recreation are faced with the enormous challenge of funding the close to home recreation sites in high demand by their residents. As indicated in the local government survey completed for *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future*, a total of \$1.02 billion in capital investments in outdoor infrastructure over the next five years is listed in the plans of survey respondents. Yet only a little more than half of this need, \$580 million, have been committed by local governments towards these investments. Only 36% of survey respondents indicate that their agency has an on-going source of funds dedicated to park, recreation, open space and trail investments, other than the Lottery funds distributed through Colorado's Conservation Trust Fund, which will distribute an estimated \$200 to 225 million to local governments during this same period.

**Goal:** Invest statewide in local community outdoors infrastructure through well-planned, on-going commitments to meet a growing population's expectations for a wide variety of safe, up-to-date sites to enjoy the outdoors.

### Objectives and Action Frameworks:

- A. Secure adequate and on-going fiscal resources to finance operating and capital investments.

#### Actions:

- Establish funding partnerships through regional collaborative forums, modeled after the GOCO Legacy Project concept.
- Develop marketing and business plans to appeal to corporate sponsorships.
- Work with state officials and agencies to attract and leverage additional funding sources.

- B. Establish maintenance resource stewardship programs to get the most effective return on capital investments.

#### Actions:

- Utilize a centralized website to post model maintenance programs and best management practices. Include sustainable design concepts for facilities and landscaping. Encourage life cycle cost projections.
- Convene collaborative forums to address specific issues, such as DNR's Drought Task Force.

- C. Address the deficiency of active public recreation sites in urban areas statewide.

#### Actions:

- Enter into regional partnerships among recreation agencies to finance large recreation complexes.
- Incorporate provision of private sector financing of recreation sites into community development planning and approval processes.





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### **Issue Three:**

***Public recreation agencies faced with tight budgets yet increasing demand for recreation services are considering increased reliance on fees and creative public/private partnerships to enhance public services.***

### **Issue Description:**

Colorado, as a state with one-third of the land base in public ownership, has a long history of creative partnerships among public agencies and with the tourism industry that has continually grown and matured to be a vital part of the Colorado economy. Ever since the days of 19th century hunting and fishing guides, private enterprise has been an integral part of public enjoyment of and access to Colorado's renowned natural landscapes. Colorado's signature ski industry is perhaps the biggest success story in the thriving public/private partnership that delivers services in demand by the public.

Coloradans and their visitors depend on businesses for a variety of services that government agencies are often not well equipped to provide, such as river outfitting, vehicle rentals, boat marinas, food service and lodging. The U.S. Forest Service makes extensive use of concession agreements with campground operators, and has piloted provision of additional public services such as trail head management through the federal Fee Demonstration project.

Colorado has also been a pace setter in inter-agency partnerships that make more efficient use of public funds. For example, Colorado State Parks has teamed up with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to establish a national model for cost share agreements that will renovate recreation facilities at nine federally sponsored water storage and control reservoirs statewide. This leveraged use of their agency funding sources will result in over \$70 million for modern, up-to-date recreation improvements that will replace facilities that have been "loved to death" by millions of people over their 20-25 year life. Another example is consolidation of operations by the U.S. Forest Service and BLM into one-stop shops for customers at offices statewide.

At a time of tight budget constraints at all levels of government, recreation agency managers must respond to the needs of a growing population that has been attracted by Colorado's special outdoor allure. To meet

these tremendous fiscal challenges, public outdoor recreation providers will need to continue and expand efforts to embrace new funding opportunities available through resourceful and creative leveraging of private and public funds consistent with mandates and resource stewardship goals. At the same time, Coloradans need to be assured that fee structures and partnerships will be affordable, accessible, user-friendly and characterized by clear benefits, such as enhanced visitor information, additional services or facility improvements.

**Goal:** Meet the fiscal challenges of providing quality public outdoor recreation opportunities through thoughtful and appropriate fee assessments, through partnerships with businesses, non-profits and other governmental agencies, and through clear communication with the public about the services provided by such efforts.

### **Objectives and Action Frameworks:**

- A. Leverage recreation agency financial resources through a creative mix of partnerships with private businesses, non-profits and other agencies consistent with agency mandates and resource stewardship goals.

#### **Actions:**

- Ensure that thorough financial analysis precedes any investment decisions through business planning tools and sharing of expertise among agencies, such as model concession agreements.
- Public recreation providers should consider expansion of non-profit and private sector business concessions to enhance customer services such as visitor center staffing.
- Federal state and local recreation providers should study the potential to establish "seamless" fees at selected areas in Colorado, particularly where different agencies provide recreation on adjacent lands. Such fees could apply to entrance or a common service (such as a trail system) offered within each jurisdiction.
- State and local recreation providers should increase and coordinate efforts to identify federal recreation grant programs to meet state and local recreation needs. Where required, matching funds required for these grants should be pursued at the state and local level.
- On federal recreation properties managed by non-federal partners such as state and local entities, more agreements to share recreation-related renovation and operating costs should be pursued.

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- B. Public recreation managers should support public services through thoughtful and appropriate fee assessments consistent with a traditional public willingness to pay for at least a portion of recreation experiences through fees.

**Actions:**

- Thoroughly analyze potential benefits and impacts on resources and citizens due to recreation fees. Studies should include fee structures to manage time, place and intensity of visitor uses; impacts on free-access public lands adjacent to or near fee areas; and mitigating impacts of fees on under-served populations.
  - Balance fee setting decisions with the acknowledgment that Americans traditionally regard their public lands as a true “public good” that provide many benefits beyond basic enjoyment of outdoor recreation. Not all operational costs of public land management should be subject to fee assessments.
  - Public and private recreation providers should explore the potential to allow the public to reserve campsites (and perhaps other opportunities) anywhere in Colorado from one location, such as on-line through Reserve America.
  - To improve the quality of wintertime recreation, the USFS, NPS, BLM, State Parks and local park jurisdictions should examine the potential to collect fees at selected sites, particularly along public highways. Fee revenues could provide plowed roads, parking lots, groomed trails and an increased management presence.
  - Thoughtfully consider whether to apply the Fee Demonstration authority granted by Congress to public agencies. Agency managers should take into account community and public opinion, and when applied follow up with clear accounting for the agency’s use of fee revenues and consistent fees across areas where similar value exists.
- C. Clearly communicate the public services enhanced by public agency fee assessment and partnership strategies.

**Actions:**

- Recreation agencies should incorporate into their marketing messages information about services provided through fees and partnerships.
- Federal recreation providers should redouble public outreach efforts about federal fee demo areas.

- Colorado Parks and Recreation Association, State Parks, Federal land managers and other recreation providers should jointly work with other public entities and private organizations to improve marketing the benefits of recreation to the public.

**Issue Four:**

*The sustainability of natural and cultural landscapes and our capability to be stewards of those resources must be considered when agencies and communities plan for and manage the location and scope of outdoor recreation activities.*

**Issue Description:**

Colorado’s natural landscapes are inextricably linked with our rich cultural traditions of Native American and early Hispanic history, mining and railroad communities, mountaineering and a social and economic base with a ranching and agricultural lifestyle. They combine to create a unique niche and set of attractions in the American West. The challenge is in sustaining these natural and cultural landscapes over time to accommodate the increases in recreational use and patterns of community expansion that come with growth. Tourism is a major economic driver in Colorado; in order to be sustainable itself, the industry needs to be able to depend on retaining the quality of our natural and cultural landscapes.

The issue is two-fold. It involves conserving both open lands and cultural heritage as well as the distinctive character of Colorado’s outstanding recreation areas and parklands. Surveys indicate that Coloradans continue to place a high value on the benefits of conserving our open lands and cultural heritage. This core value is reflected in Coloradans’ willingness to dedicate funding sources such as the Lottery, Historic Preservation Fund, and sales taxes to fund parks, open space, wildlife protection, and trails. While much has been accomplished, there is a need for a more strategic approach to most effectively focus these resources on regional and site level conservation priorities.

Surveys also indicate that while Coloradans value large parks with wide range of camping, trails, boating and fishing, they also value backcountry areas with little or no development. Likewise, they place a premium on being able to spend time with their families yet get away from crowds. Clearly, Coloradans have preferences for a wide variety of recreation settings and for an equally

diverse array of experiences. Not all of these can be provided or achieved at the same time or at the same recreation sites. Colorado's recreation attractions, however, have enough diversity that both can be achieved simultaneously through careful planning which target those settings and outcomes most appropriate to each place.

**Goal:** Manage recreation within the constraints of sustainable landscapes, acknowledging the dependence of recreational opportunities and economic factors on healthy ecological systems, and cultural and community integrity.

#### **Objective and Action Frameworks:**

- A. Build a statewide inventory of natural, cultural area, and recreation settings and opportunities and assess additional site conservation priorities including inventory of existing conserved sites, followed by identification of future site protection priorities.

##### **Actions:**

- Convene multi-interest regional forums to assess natural and cultural landscape conservation priorities.

- B. Make the most effective use of limited public and private capital investment resources by developing collaborative strategies among public agencies, business community, farm and ranch owners and non-profits.

##### **Actions:**

- On a regional basis, assemble motivated private and public sector interests to develop collaborative site conservation financing strategies.

- C. Sustain the natural values of each conserved site through effective site designs for facilities and appropriate recreation uses.

##### **Actions:**

- Encourage the adoption of a common set of site design and management guidelines, including:
- Resource inventories
- Public preferences for recreation use
- Stewardship and management plans
- Monitoring plans

- Establish a centralized website to compile reference material for land managers to rely upon for site design practices.

- D. Sustain each recreation area's most distinctive recreation settings as needed to produce opportunities for those recreation experiences most valued by visitors and host communities.

##### **Actions:**

- Assess visitor and community resident recreation preferences for experiences and other quality of life outcomes, setting conditions, and recreation provider actions required to meet those preferences.
- Ensure that management plans explicitly target specific recreation activities and experiences and identify setting conditions to sustain them.

#### **Issue Five:**

*Public access to outdoor sites and management of travel on public lands is challenged by the capacity of our statewide transportation infrastructure and of our natural resources sites to accommodate the volume of demand.*

#### **Issue Description:**

Much of Colorado's \$7 billion tourism industry depends on the effectiveness of transportation networks in enabling citizens and visitors to travel to the outstanding array of recreation sites statewide. Many of those sites are on the extraordinary public lands which comprise about one third of our land base, or along river canyons and lakes. Yet our growing population is critically challenging the capacity of our highways to handle traffic volumes, and of the access points to and among our public lands and waterways. River recreation sites that pass through or are adjacent to private lands present challenges to ensuring property rights are respected by river recreationists. Pressures mount on fish and wildlife populations as habitat is squeezed by the development of roadways and by increased recreational use of public lands.

**Goal:** Provide appropriate levels of recreational access while maintaining the sustainability of Colorado's outdoors resources.

#### **Objectives and Action Frameworks:**

- A. Facilitate efficient access to recreation sites from transportation networks.

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**Actions:**

- Outdoor recreation and tourism representatives should participate in CDOT regional planning processes to prioritize transportation network investments. Develop Corridor Visions as part of these plans.
  - Stimulate the development of inter-modal transportation networks, with emphasis on transportation hubs to interface travel modes.
  - Encourage incentives for off-peak use of transportation networks.
  - Develop additional recreation sites close to communities, particularly an interlinked network of community and regional trails.
  - Identify river access “hotspots” that can impact private property rights, develop public information resources that guide recreationists to avoid impacts, and develop investment strategies to mitigate potential conflicts.
- B. Increase the capability to access recreation sites on mountain passes from road networks.

**Actions:**

- Make mountain pass access nodes an explicit part of the CDOT Corridor Visions regional plans. Plan for parking, transit stops, sanitary facilities, recreation use zones.
  - Implement the “Snow Park” concept currently used by other states to manage demand for winter recreation. Establish parking fees to finance snow removal and recreation management presence.
- C. Compile public lands travel management plans that are responsive to competing recreation demands while sustaining wildlife habitats.

**Actions:**

- Assess visitor and user preferences.
- Integrate trail networks across jurisdictions, including joint financing strategies.
- Pay special attention to OHV management through collaborative processes to identify trail networks and through identification of “hot spots” that require focused management strategies.

**Issue Six:**

*Recreation agencies can more effectively engage Colorado’s citizens and visitors in resource stewardship responsibilities through youth outreach and volunteer programs.*

**Issue Description:**

Public recreation agencies faced with allocating limited funds for the range of recreation and resource management responsibilities often find themselves constrained in fully staffing these activities. Increasingly, agency managers are turning to volunteers and youth conservation corps programs as an effective means to not only supplement work forces but also to engage their communities in better understanding their resource stewardship goals.

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) is recognized as a statewide leader in promoting and coordinating Coloradans engagement in outdoor volunteerism. Since 1984, VOC has worked with more than 40,000 Coloradans to complete 171 conservation projects worth in excess of \$8 million. VOC surveys indicate that 52% of state and federal land managers already engage volunteer help at least once a month. The local government survey completed for this plan revealed less reliance on volunteers, with 16% of local governments relying on volunteers for visitor services and 12% for maintenance and construction. Nonetheless, local governments average 296,300 total volunteer hours per year, a significant value for services performed to meet agency recreation goals. Volunteers report experiencing a deep sense of accomplishment and developed a heightened understanding of resource stewardship.

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.

The Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA), launched as an initiative in 1997 by Great Outdoors Colorado and a number of private funders, develops and maintains a network of locally operating youth conservation corps programs that work to preserve and enhance the environment. Youth are engaged 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 five new corps serving the West Slope, San Luis Valley, Southwestern Colorado and the Eastern Plains. The number of youth served has tripled, with over 620 youth participating during 2003.

Additional opportunities to engage youth in resource stewardship can be realized through school science and civic engagement curricula and through outdoor education programs.

**Goal:** To encourage public participation in the protection of Colorado's outdoors resources through youth outreach and volunteerism.

#### **Objectives and Action Frameworks:**

- A. Focus on youth outreach efforts to sustain a public outdoors stewardship ethic.

##### **Actions:**

- Promote school activities such as eco-weeks, take-a-hike weeks, and community outdoor service projects through the development of a state-endorsed public education partnership.
- Promote environmental service through paid service such as youth conservation corps.
- Use outdoor volunteer service as credits for science and physical education coursework requirements.
- Utilize a central website as a clearinghouse about outdoor education facilities and programs.
- Incorporate outdoor education programs such as Project Wild and Project Learning Tree into statewide science and physical education standards and curricula.

- B. Increase local capacity to engage volunteers in public lands stewardship.

##### **Actions:**

- Implement the Colorado Outdoor Training Initiative to deliver coordinated statewide training of volunteers.
- Develop a statewide information resource that provides a one-stop shop for all volunteer stewardship opportunities.
- Launch a statewide marketing effort to promote public outdoors-based volunteer and youth involvement.

