



Colorado Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Recreation Funding Study Overview

Background

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has long been interested in diversifying its funding sources beyond the traditional North American model, which relies heavily on hunting and fishing license fees to support wildlife and lands managed by the state. While CPW has developed additional funding sources over time, such as GOCO/lottery funding, a tax check-off program, and a license plate program, hunting and fishing license fees and associated excise taxes still make up over 70% of the agency's wildlife budget.

Recently, CPW has been forced to consider an increase in resident hunting and fishing license fees, partially as a result of decreasing participation in these activities and increasing costs associated with growing demands for services from the public. Unfortunately, HB17-1321, a bill designed to increase revenue from hunters and anglers, failed to pass through the Colorado statehouse in 2017. CPW will continue its efforts to generate additional revenue from traditional user groups, however, it is clear that the long-term viability of the agency depends on its ability to develop new sources of funding to support increasing public interest in wildlife conservation and outdoor recreational activities.

Proposed Study

HB17-1321 contained a requirement that CPW evaluate the impact of “non-consumptive users” (i.e. non-hunters and anglers) on agency-managed lands and to propose recommendations addressing how these users could help cover CPW's costs for maintaining these lands. While HB17-1321 failed, the need for this study remains. CPW has spent significant time and resources considering the additional revenue that could be generated from hunting and fishing license increases through its financial sustainability initiative and the development of HB17-1321. However, additional research and stakeholder outreach with new recreational users are necessary to develop a suite of funding options that will allow CPW to serve the public.

CPW envisions a study that would review existing CPW funding sources and financial challenges, examine new conservation funding approaches undertaken in other states or countries, and evaluate those strategies via consultation with Colorado recreational users and associated businesses. The purpose of the study is not to develop one recommended strategy, but to narrow the list of potential funding sources for the purpose of informing stakeholders, CPW, and policymakers about the most viable funding options going forward. In addition to evaluating stakeholders' willingness-to-pay, information should be gathered about each stakeholder group's vision for the future of recreation and conservation in Colorado, and how CPW should fit into that vision. A proposed outline of this study follows.



1. Background (largely complete)
 - a. Overview of CPW financial challenges and existing funding streams
 - b. Existing CPW proposals/legislation to generate revenue from hunters and anglers
2. Case studies and literature review of funding options (new research)
 - a. Colorado Wildlife Passport failure
 - b. "Backpack tax" proposals
 - c. Sales tax-based proposals
 - d. Oregon's bike tax
 - e. Voluntary/donation-based proposals
 - f. Usage of new payment technology/cell phones
 - g. Other innovative approaches
3. Stakeholder outreach and future vision for recreation/CPW (new research)
 - a. Recreational bikers
 - b. Non-motorized boaters (Rafts, kayaks, SUPs, canoes)
 - c. Hikers/wildlife watchers
 - d. Climbers/skiers
 - e. Recreational equipment manufacturers and dealers
 - f. Outfitters/guides
 - g. Tourism and hospitality-related businesses
 - h. Conservation organizations
 - i. Private landowners/agriculture
 - j. Policymakers (local/state government actors)
4. Alternatives analysis and willingness-to-pay (findings)
 - a. Narrowing of funding options
 - b. Detailed analysis of most viable 3-5 funding strategies/options

General Timeline

August-September 2017: Secure funding for study

October-December 2017: Announce study, circulate RFP, and select consultant

January-February 2018: Complete background and case studies

February-April 2018: Stakeholder outreach

May-June 2018: Complete alternatives analysis and report

July 2018: Results of study presented (possibly at Outdoor Retailers Trade Show in Denver)

Funding Need

The Department of Natural Resources and CPW expect to develop an RFP to solicit proposals for the completion of this study, so a precise cost for the study is unknown at this time. After consulting with partners that have commissioned studies on related topics, such as Colorado Water Plan funding, we estimate that the study will cost between \$40-50,000.