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**Conservation and Recreation Vision**

**Bullet Talking Points**

* NoCo is a collaborative of eight public land agencies working together to address increased visitation – a common voice for public lands in northern Colorado Front Range
* Formed because a landscape-scale, multi-jurisdictional effort is needed to address the challenge
  + 7.48 million people in Colorado in 2050
  + 6.3 million of those will live on Front Range
  + NoCo region will see the brunt of the impact because of its proximity
* NoCo has many efforts underway, including development of a conservation and recreation vision
  + NoCo used research, decision-support tools and stakeholder input to develop it
  + Identifies desired future conditions and shared management principles to achieve those conditions
    - Landscapes and biodiversity are conserved, restored, and climate resilient
    - Outdoor opportunities are high quality and inclusive of diverse visitors
    - Management balances environmental, social, and economic needs
    - Visitors care for lands, honor rules, and are courteous of each other
    - Cultures and histories are valued and celebrated
    - Managers, partners, communities, and the public work together
  + These will guide and inform each agency as plans are developed or updated
  + Enables all eight agencies to take a collaborative and holistic approach to managing

**A logo of a mountain and river

Description automatically generated**

**Conservation and Recreation Vision**

**Talking Points**

**OVERVIEW**

**Who is NoCo Places?**NoCo Places is a collaborative of eight public land managers – two at the federal level, one at the state level, and five counties – who are committed to working together to find solutions to the challenge of the impacts of increased visitation to public lands in this region. They are a common voice for public lands in north-central Colorado.

Since forming in 2019, NoCo has also become one of 17 Regional Partners under the Regional Partner Initiative that was created by an Executive Order signed by Governor Polis and funded by both Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado.

**Why was NoCo Places created?**The northern Colorado Front Range is a beautiful and special area. The assets in the region – the public land, the flora, the fauna, and the recreation opportunities – must be protected for generations to come. High and concentrated visitation to public lands along with Colorado’s growing population is putting pressure on the natural resources and the overall visitor experience. Addressing this challenge requires landscape scale, multi-jurisdictional collaboration.

**What is NoCo doing to address this challenge?**

NoCo Places has several initiatives underway to protect and preserve what makes this region special, including:

* A Conservation and Recreation Vision and associated management principles enable all eight agencies to take a collaborative and holistic approach to managing lands in this region.
* Identifying and implementing steps that can be taken to ensure public lands in this region are welcoming and respectful of all visitors.
* Investing in data and decision support tools to understand biodiversity and recreation patterns in the region as well as unauthorized trail use.
* Providing common messaging campaigns where all eight agencies speak with one voice to educate visitors on how they can be stewards of the land. Examples include a concerted effort to promote COTREX, the state trails app, as the most accurate app to use, and a recent public lands map created by NoCo to educate tourists on locations and alternatives to visit and ways they can be stewards of the land.

**CONSERVATION AND RECREATION VISION**

**What does NoCo’s conservation and recreation vision include?**The vision describes current conditions, shared values, desired future conditions, a shared management philosophy, and management strategies and activities to achieve conservation and recreation goals. Examples are conserving and restoring landscapes and biodiversity and making them climate resilient, ensuring that outdoor experiences are high quality and inclusive of diverse visitors, helping visitors become stewards of our lands, and more. These shared principles will guide and inform each agency as their plans are developed and updated. The visioning process also informed the development of an action plan to guide key projects for the next several years.

**Why is this vision important?**

Public lands in the NoCo region have experienced a significant increase in visitation in recent years, negatively impacting wildlife, the environment, and the Colorado outdoor experience, and the challenge will only intensify as Colorado continues to grow. In 2050, the state’s population is expected to grow to 7.48 million people, with 6.3 million of those residents living along the Front Range. Many of those will visit the public lands in the NoCo region because of its proximity to Front Range communities.

Sharing management approaches across jurisdictions is essential to addressing this challenge. Wildlife and (frequently) visitors do not distinguish between land management jurisdictions. This vision and associated management principles will enable all eight agencies to take a collaborative and holistic approach to managing lands in this region so that the future of this region and the Colorado outdoor experience is protected for generations to come. Having two federal agencies, one state agency and five counties agree on the desired future of this region is a positive – and potentially unprecedented – step for public land management.

The five counties participating in NoCo Places—Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Larimer—passed a resolution supporting the adoption and implementation of the conservation and recreation vision.

**How was this vision developed?**Through a commitment to collaboration, a deep dive into core topic research, connecting with partner organizations in the region, and gathering data, a conservation and recreation vision will come to life.

NoCo Places based the development of the Vision on three essential sets of data. First, it worked with leading wildlife and plant data experts to develop a Conservation Summary map, a data-rich illustration of the biodiversity in the region, as well as areas of species and conservation concern.

The second data element is the analysis of two years of mobile phone data from visitors to 70 hot spots in the NoCo region. This data provides a perspective of multiple years and seasons to the story of how people use open spaces and natural areas. Analysis of the data can help make a better experience for visitors while monitoring their impact on these landscapes over time.

The third piece of key data is input from stakeholders. Sixteen focus groups were conducted with stakeholders to understand their values and perspectives on this region's future and on various management approaches that could be utilized.

Together, these spatial data and decision support tools help us understand the current landscape and plan for conservation and recreation in the future.

The Executive Committee utilized this data to develop a draft of the vision that was then shared with the NoCo Partners whose input was incorporated.

**When will this vision be implemented?**The shared principles of the vision will guide and inform each agency as their plans are developed and updated. For example, the US Forest Service will soon begin the update of the Forest Management Plan for the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, and this vision and the data that went into its development will be immensely helpful and valuable for that process.

The vision also identifies near-term actions to be taken, including developing shared principles for the management of unauthorized trails, a multi-agency volunteer strategy to coordinate and leverage capacity, and a coordinated camping/campsite management strategy for the NoCo region, among others.