



February 23rd, 2024

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Attn: Jody Kennedy

Via Email at [jody.kennedy@state.co.us](mailto:jody.kennedy@state.co.us)

**RE: 2024 SCORP Development Effort**

Dear Ms. Kennedy:

Please accept these comments from the Trail Preservation Alliance regarding the development of the new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

The Trails Preservation Alliance (TPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on preserving Off Highway Motorcycle (OHM) recreation. The TPA takes the necessary actions to ensure that Land Managers including Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) achieve a balanced amount of access for OHM recreation on public lands. In addition, the TPA is active in education and outreach and supporting the establishment and operation of regional off-highway motorcycle clubs.

We have actively participated in the development of the previous version of the SCORP and have been supporting participants in CPW led efforts such as Partners in the Outdoors conferences, the OHV Grant program, and others. We are aware of the success that the SCORP has had in addressing issues such as providing solutions to historically limited funding sources. While these new funding sources are significant, they have targeted uses that were traditionally underfunded. This situation has changed over the last SCORP's life and now non-motorized recreation is

disproportionally provided funding exceeding that of both the motorized and snowmobile programs combined. As a result, we would ask for equity in the allocation of new funding sources. While the OHV and snowmobile registration programs have provided immense amounts of funding for decades, it was not the intention of these programs to become the sole funding source for multiple-use trails.

Our constituent and supporters have been actively engaged in CPW programmatic efforts such as scoring hundreds of OHV grant applications with the CPW trails committees and actively participating on many other committees and subcommittees. Our engagement has also expanded in the last five years with many of the newly formed Regional Partnerships across the state (e.g., Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Envision Chaffee County, NoCo Places, etc.). Our constituents have also actively partnered with the USFS and BLM offices and staff to perform a wide range of services around trails that benefit all users including cutting trees that block trails, teaching new employees how to operate equipment, hiring maintenance crews to address site specific problems, addressing new challenges such as people living on public lands and post fire disaster restoration efforts.

We have embraced addressing many new challenges facing the State, however we cannot overlook the fact that in some regions of the state interests are badly divided and often simple challenges become highly political or overly confrontational. It seems we are departing from a long Colorado history of dealing with challenges collaboratively. These impacts have been witnessed in CPW public meetings where CPW representatives are observed preemptively disconnecting communication with a member of the public while making comments on the transparency of agency processes. We are concerned about the impacts and message this sends - volunteers could become less willing to volunteer or partners may direct funding elsewhere when recreation is not prioritized equitably. We request that the SCORP seek to address this as a challenge moving forward. Just as many of our partners are now champions for the motto of *"be nice – say hi"* on the trails, this motto ought to be embraced in both CPW meetings and recreational projects more now than ever before.

While multi-use motorized single-track is our passion, our ability to pursue this passion is substantially underrepresented, comprising only 8% percent of all trails in the state. The TPA has endeavored diligently to address motorized recreational access issues with the development of a self-funded statewide strategic plan. The Colorado Off Highway Motorcycle Trail Opportunity Plan (COTOP) was developed for the OHM community to graphically portray current opportunities, identify strengths and weaknesses of those opportunities, highlight where land management strategies are favorable for OHM recreation and suggest where opportunities might be improved upon. The alignment of COTOP, the SCORP development and CPW restructuring should not be overlooked or ignored. Upon your request, we would gladly share a copy of this visionary strategic plan for your reference.

In the interest of cooperative collaboration, the TPA would like to raise another suggested issue for the SCORP to address, which is the staffing challenges that are faced by both CPW and Federal land managers. While staffing has always been a difficult issue in many parts of the State, we have seen this become an almost unresolvable challenge very quickly. This has presented immense problems as too many positions with our CPW and Federal land manager partners are simply going unfilled.

As a result of these barriers from staffing, the motorized community has taken what is virtually an unheard-of step to understand basic components of the staffing challenges. It has been our experience that we need to clearly understand problems before they can be solved, and the motorized community has also developed research to try and address basic barriers to hiring. We were leaders in attempting to understand if hiring challenges were isolated to federal land managers or if it also encompassed state managers. Were similar challenges seen in the private sector or is this disproportionally in the public sector? Was the Youth Corp seeing similar challenges in hiring their crews? Many wanted to simply increase salaries, but those that have increased salaries have not seen major improvements in hiring and retention. Many thought this hiring barrier was a lack of awareness of federal positions, which resulted in

a federal hiring blitz over the last two years. Once again, if you are interested, we will provide you a copy of this research.

Even those existing positions that are being filled are being filled by employees that often lack the experience, skills and even a basic understanding of the decades of efforts that have resulted in management accomplishments to the level where they are today in the state. Rather than celebrating these preceding successes, such as wildlife populations being at or above goals in the State, we too often hear wildlife populations are collapsing or that travel management has not occurred from many new federal and state employees. Often this erroneous narrative is coming from groups that neither support the agency nor recognize even the most basic tenants of public lands management such as the multiple-use mandate. This is creating immense conflict and stopping desperately needed projects from moving forward, such as expanding recreational infrastructure in the State. For far too long we have simply assumed there would be a sufficient supply of these opportunities and in many areas, this is now proven to be an incorrect assumption.

We thank you for this opportunity to comment on the SCORP. We believe the SCORP should guide CPW through its upcoming revisions in structure and provide a vision for the newly created recreation division within CPW for the next several years.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CHAD HIXON', written over a horizontal line.

Chad Hixon

Executive Director

Trails Preservation Alliance