

Implementation Timeline and Action

The *Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future* plan was designed to be dynamic in nature. Two types of implementing actions that call for on-going engagement by outdoor recreation stakeholders are included in its recommendations:

1. ***The Strategic Plan described in Chapter Five of the plan identifies six issues of statewide significance, each of which outlines Action Frameworks to tackle the challenges associated with each issue.***

The Strategic Plan also recommends two initiatives intended to further the dialogue among public and private sector outdoor recreation stakeholders that is key to the successful implementation of the Strategic Plan:

- Regional forums convened to adopt collaborative strategies among public recreation agencies, tourism business operators, local community leaders, resource specialists, and non-profit organizations responsible for delivering the outdoors experiences visitors value. The regional forums are intended to be a primary vehicle for implementing the Action Frameworks associated with each strategic issue of statewide significance identified in the Strategic Plan. The forums will be asked to 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
- In recognition of the working partnership between the tourism industry and public agency recreation managers, the annual Governor's Colorado

Tourism Conference in October, 2003 included a special focus on tourism and the outdoors. Recreation agency directors and managers joined with tourism business operators and promoters and with local community leaders to engage in the following objectives:

- Strengthen the natural linkages among the tourism industry and communities, public land agencies, and private outdoor recreation groups and businesses.
 - Highlight the essential role that outdoor recreation plays in Colorado's economy, featuring findings published in the Colorado's Outdoor Recreation Future plan.
 - Engage tourism business people in considering how outdoor recreation trends translate into business opportunities for them.
 - Describe the challenges Colorado faces in sustaining the outdoor resources that define Colorado as a unique and special place.
 - Explore and identify strategic partnerships that communities, public agencies, industry and non-profit stakeholders can pursue to sustain Colorado's capability to meet public expectations for outdoor recreation.
 - Publicize conference results.
2. ***The second type of implementing action is the distribution of Colorado's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) annual allocations. Subject to the annual Congressional appropriations process, the funds are distributed to the states according to a formula based on population and land area of each state. Known as the stateside allocation of LWCF funds, this annual decision making process has resulted in Colorado allocations in recent years in the \$1.5 to 2.3 million range.***

LWCF statutes direct stateside use of LWCF funds be limited to either state recreation agency or local government parks and recreation projects. Historically, the Colorado Board of Parks and Recreation, the policy setting oversight board for Colorado State Parks, has chosen to divide Colorado's allocation between state park projects and local government projects.

LWCF regulations direct the states to distribute the stateside allocations according to an Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). Each state is responsible for determining its own OPSP, subject to LWCF guidelines. The primary LWCF requirement regarding the OPSP is that project selection criteria must be consistent with SCORP priorities. For Colorado, those priorities are outlined in Chapter 2 for State Parks capital investment priorities, in Chapter 3 for local governments on a regional basis, and in Chapter 5, which identifies Strategic Plan issues of statewide significance.

The Colorado OPSP

Prior to the cessation of stateside LWCF congressional appropriations in 1995, Colorado State Parks employed an OPSP that provided for statewide competition among local government agencies for a wide range of outdoor recreation capital improvement projects.

Since 2000, when stateside LWCF congressional appropriations resumed, Colorado State Parks has worked with local recreation agency officials to allocate LWCF funds through the State Trails Program granting process. The Directors Section of the Colorado Parks and Recreation Association, the statewide organization of recreation professionals, has agreed that rather than re-start the former staff intensive OPSP process for a limited amount of funds, it makes sense to include stateside LWCF funds as one of the sources to finance the annual State Trails Program grants.

The State Trails Program grants process meets the intent of the LWCF OPSP requirements:

- Community trails continue to be the top priority for recreation facility needs expressed by Colorado's local governments, as outlined in Chapter 3 of this plan.
- The State Trails Program grants process has a statewide reach and is an open competitive process that is well established and well known by local governments. The process is widely publicized, has clear and comprehensive criteria, and involves an extensive screening and ranking process.

In future years, Colorado State Parks intends to continue consultation with local government recreation agencies on the most appropriate means of distributing stateside LWCF funds. In the near future, it appears unlikely that Congressional allocations of stateside LWCF funds will significantly increase. Due to the limited amount of LWCF funds available, it is apparent that their most effective use

may be in leveraging them with other sources of funds for outdoor recreation projects.

It is anticipated that the use of LWCF funds will be included in the discussions of the Regional Forums recommended by this plan. A key purpose of these collaborative forums is to identify regional priorities and investment strategies for recreation lands and facilities. These investment decisions are best made at the regional level; one example is the Colorado Front Range Trail which is being financed through a leveraged combination of LWCF, Great Outdoors Colorado, and other funds available to local parks and recreation agencies. The Regional Forums could also be an appropriate venue for also discussing federal agency applications for the federal side of LWCF appropriations.

Implementation Timeline:

1. Short term Implementing Actions (1-2 years)

- a) Marketing the plan through media releases, correspondence and direct contacts targeting:
 - Local governments and regional planning agencies
 - Colorado Tourism Office
 - Federal agencies
 - Non-profits
 - Outdoor industry
 - State Agencies
- b) Regional forum pilot projects. Two pilot projects to be selected, employing seed money from LWCF through Colorado State Parks SCORP planning funds. A range of public agency, private sector, local community, non-profit and public participants will be identified.
- c) Governor's Annual Tourism Conference, October, 2003. Engage public land managers, tourism business operators and promoters, and community leaders in partnership building strategies.

2. Long Term Implementing Actions (2-10 years)

- a) Collaborative Regional Forums continue, expanding statewide based on the two initial pilot projects. May also be eligible for LWCF SCORP planning funds.
- b) Additional research - trends, preferences of specific demographic groups, and especially economic data on the tourism/outdoor recreation interface.
- c) Develop a more participatory role for public recreation agencies with the Colorado Tourism Office and Colorado Tourism Board. Continue engaging outdoor recreation stakeholders in the Governor's Annual Tourism Conference.

