

SUMMARY: CPW COLORADO OUTDOOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS GRANT FOR THE OURAY RECREATION & CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Background: Ouray County submitted a grant application in 2021 to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative. The application was awarded to advance local and regional needs that align with a state-level vision for recreation management and conservation on public lands. Please see CPW Colorado's Outdoor Principles and Colorado Outdoor Partnership Initiative handouts for more detail.

Summary of Ouray County's proposal to CPW

A vision for ORCA: ORCA will be comprised of community members that provide adaptive leadership to help balance competing demands for quality outdoor recreation opportunities and related infrastructure while conserving and enhancing environmental integrity to support healthy ecosystems, wildlife, water resources, and Ouray County's incredible scenic beauty. OCRA will work across jurisdictional and land ownership boundaries as an all-lands approach is critical to planning for wildlife and natural resource conservation along with the growing demand for recreation access.

The County identified an initial list of needs related to recreation management and conservation and those include:

- Develop strategies to provide sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities, including trail networks;
- Proactively manage visitors and maintain infrastructure to provide positive outdoor recreation experiences while limiting resource impacts;
- Strengthen public-private relationships and collaborative efforts to connect more people to on-the-ground activities, enhance habitat restoration and conservation and build capacity for organizations engaged in this work; and,
- Leverage limited local, state, and federal resources with creative public-private partnerships.

What does this mean? What is happening now?

The CPW Colorado Outdoor Partnership grant presents an incredible opportunity for the community to collaboratively identify and address emerging issues and safeguard areas identified as significant for conservation, working lands, and recreation access. Ouray County, with the help of the National Forest Foundation, has organized a Convening Committee to initiate the launching of the Ouray Recreation and Conservation Alliance.

Now, the Convening Committee is looking to the community to co-create a formal committee, set priorities for management and resource investments, and jointly determine how to respond to proposals for new trails and other infrastructure in and around Ouray County.

The Ouray Recreation & Conservation Alliance Convening & Organizing Committee is comprised of Ouray County, City of Ouray, Town of Ridgway, Gunnison County, Hinsdale County, Colorado Parks, and Wildlife, Ridgway State Park, the Ouray Ranger District of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, the Bureau of Land Management, the Uncompahgre Field Office, and the Uncompahgre Watershed Partnership, and the National Forest Foundation.

ORCA MEETING #1: THEMES AND IDEAS

- Community cares about the outdoors and loves public lands
- Increased visitation
 - Increased pressure from recreation use is stressing the local/regional community - loving the backcountry to death - yet it's an economic driver
 - Recreational and community infrastructure wasn't designed for the levels of use the region is experiencing
 - There is a high demand for recreation but there are other priorities - and some things aren't compatible
- Time is right to unify around shared recreation and conservation values
 - Be proactive instead of reactionary
 - A bottom-up, collaborative approach that focuses on common ground and builds mutual understanding
 - Diversity and inclusion are critical
 - Need transparency
 - Need to help educate different user groups
 - Need to work across jurisdictions, including on private land
 - Agency-backed
- Identify community priority acres and focus on those as "zones of agreement"
 - Conserve 4x4 trails
 - Increased river access and educational signage is important
 - Recognize needs and impacts associated with new motorized vehicles/trails
 - Recognize traditional uses of the land
 - Sportsmen and agriculture need to be at the table
 - Sustainable wildlife populations
- Identify early/easy wins. Ideas and "low hanging fruit" mentioned:
 - Inventory recreation uses and develop short, mid, and long-term management goals
 - Identify places where we can do more, places where we should do less, and places to avoid altogether
 - Understand critical recreation infrastructure - what is in place, what do we need, and what resources exist to help manage existing infrastructure?
 - Develop a camping plan across land ownerships including a better structure to manage dispersed camping
 - Create more uniform/centralized communications related to recreation including GIS/mapping resources and wayfinding
 - Create more uniform rec rules (policies/protocols) across land ownerships
 - Enhance wildlife corridors

- Think about permits and user fees?
- Trail planning