

# Advancing Colorado's Regional Partnerships Initiative

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**Partners: Colorado Parks and Wildlife & Great Outdoors Colorado**

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## Purpose

The Regional Partnerships Initiative (RPI) is a state network of regionally based coalitions known as “Regional Partnerships” (RPs) that bring together broad outdoor interests to advance conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation priorities. The capstone project had two focuses: 1) to create a resource that would help existing and new RPs navigate their developmental journeys from formation to maturation, and 2) to produce a landscape analysis of eastern and southern Colorado regions that are not yet served by a RP with recommendations on a path forward for CPW and GOCO to grow the initiative in these parts of the state.

## Methods

This project was primarily informed by semi-structured interviews. This included 19 interviews with RP leads from across the state and 11 interviews with key stakeholders representing conservation, outdoor recreation, economic development and agriculture across eastern and southern Colorado. Interviews were qualitatively analyzed using a thematic coding methodology. This primary research was complemented by secondary desktop research to address information gaps concerning existing RPs. This included analyzing resources affiliated with individual RPs like charters, governance and planning documents, annual reports, project overviews, etc.

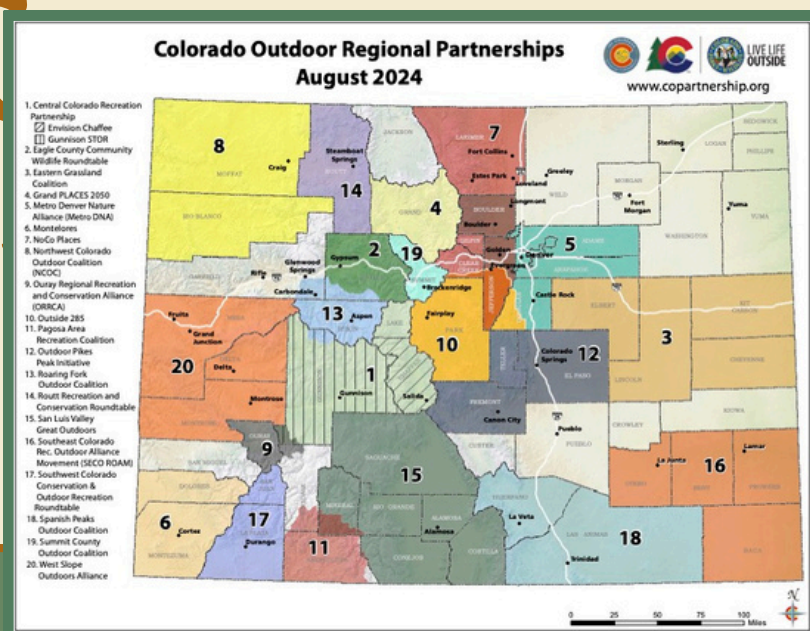


Figure 1: Map of Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships (Source: The Colorado Outdoor Partnership, n.d.)



## Deliverables, Outcome & Impact

**1. PR Peer Learning Resource:** RP leads emphasized the value of the statewide cohort of RP leads for peer learning. Monthly virtual meetings and individual conversations between the leads is helpful, but a need surfaced for institutionalizing some of this informal peer learning. The student team thus compiled information available across interviews and RP-related written materials into comprehensive profiles of each RP. This includes a narrative description of their developmental journey as well as key information on things like their governance and structure, funding strategy, priorities, and project work to date. Alongside the RP profiles is an overview of the common phases of development RPs move through as they mature, which contains common challenges and lessons learned from across RPs relevant to each phase. This resource will help RP leads better understand and learn from the work of their peers and will assist them moving forward in better identifying which of their peers they may have more in common with to facilitate future peer learning conversations.

**2. Recommendations to CPW and GOCO:** RP leads noted a number of additional resource needs that would support their development that were outside of the scope of the student team to produce. Similarly leads offered a variety of programmatic suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the RPI. These findings were synthesized into a suite of recommendations for CPW and GOCO on the path forward for best supporting the developmental needs of existing RPs. Highlighted recommendations include developing templates for RP governance and conducting state-level advocacy to federal public lands agencies around the importance of participating in the initiative.

**3. Landscape Analysis and Recommendations for Growing the RPI in Eastern and Southern Colorado:** Eastern and southern Colorado are very different culturally and geographically than much of the rest of the state, and CPW needs to understand how the RPI can best serve these regions. The student team conducted interviews in four regions: northeast Colorado, southeast Colorado, Pueblo County, and Custer County. Interview findings were compiled into profiles for each region containing key information that can inform how CPW endeavors to build out new RPs in these areas. This includes things like an overview of historical and ongoing efforts around conservation, outdoor recreation, and collaboration within each region, attitudes towards CPW, challenges, and aspirations for the future. These regional profiles are complemented by big-picture key findings and recommendations that span the four regions and suggest a strategy for how CPW ought to work to grow the RPI across eastern and southern Colorado. One key finding, for example, is the juxtaposition of high community regard for local boots-on-the-ground CPW staff alongside distrust of the agency as a whole and government conservation initiatives more broadly. This leads to a recommendation that CPW ought to lean on the expertise and social capital of their local frontline staff to promote the initiative in these regions.

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