



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What does OPPI stand for?

OPPI is an acronym for Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative – the name for this project. It is a part of the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative, which encompasses coalitions from other regions across Colorado who are doing similar work. The Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP) started this Initiative as a way to empower local Colorado communities to determine and plan for their unique conservation and recreation priorities that will eventually inform a statewide plan. The CO-OP launched this effort in 2021, following authorization from Colorado Governor Jared Polis, the Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (PPORA) was selected as the convener for this region's Regional Partnership.

### 2. Why is this initiative happening and why is this planning urgent?

The Pikes Peak region's iconic landscapes and abundant recreation opportunities contribute significantly to quality of life and economic vitality. However, unprecedented front-range growth threatens both natural resources and recreational experiences. Not designed for the high use they are getting, outdoor infrastructure such as bathrooms, parking, trash receptacles, campgrounds, etc. are overrun and insufficient. Under-resourced land managers do their best with existing staff and funding to address these impacts and recreational planning needs, but management is an uphill battle.

Without a large-scope singular plan, thoughtful management, and adequate funding – the negative impacts from this increased use on the popular areas overwhelms the land managers for whom recreation is only one of many priorities. Their efforts then become necessarily focused on enforcement and mitigation from impacts rather than future-looking development of amenities in underutilized areas that would disperse recreation, providing the experience the public wants, while balancing the preservation and protection of our special places.

Recreation is not evenly distributed throughout the Pikes Peak region. Cities along the urban core, like Colorado Springs, are experiencing the Front Range challenges of balancing high use and impacts while some rural areas, such as Cripple Creek and Victor, are eager to develop recreation as an economic driver and develop recreation assets that could disperse recreation and create unique outdoor experiences for the public.

The challenges we were seeing before the pandemic have been greatly magnified now and the need for planning for our future has never been more important or urgent. The projections for growth along the Front Range and particularly Colorado Springs is significant. Colorado is expected to add 1.5 million new residents by 2030, and Colorado Springs is expected to be Colorado's largest city by 2050. These new residents are coming for many reasons but listed consistently at the top is the region's quality of life and recreational opportunities.

What this means is more people, more outdoor usage, different types of usage and expectation, and a greater need to work together. This initiative seeks to create a pathway of balance between preservation and recreation. The urgency of the need is met with State resources that we've never seen before through the new Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative. We need to engage now through this statewide planning, as it is our best opportunity to effect change and plan for our future, with financial resources, tools, best practice sharing, and public private partnerships.

### 3. What is different about this plan vs other plans?

This plan takes a balanced approach to looking at the future – being neither a “conservation only” plan nor a “recreation only” plan. It is a thoughtful approach to bring all of the available, credible data to the table along with stakeholders, land managers, and the public to “to ensure the resiliency of the region's public lands, water, wildlife, working farms and ranches, as well as sustainable world class outdoor recreation opportunities for all.”

There are 100+ plans within the Pikes Peak region that address components of conservation or outdoor recreation that have been completed over the years and are in some stage of implementation. These are great plans and still relevant in many ways. In fact, Phase One of this process included procuring and evaluating these plans, along with interviewing land managers with responsibilities for the plans, to better understand their priorities, challenges, and aspirations. All these plans will be brought into the Outdoor Pikes Peak Data Hub – never before have all of these plans been available to the public in one place!

In addition to the land manager evaluations, those plans relating more closely to the smaller Area of Interest will serve as a building block to this Plan, to create one overall strategy for all entities to work together.

One other significant difference is that this Plan and Initiative has the support, commitment, confidence, and collaboration through its connection to the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative, which was authorized by Governor Jared Polis, launched through the Colorado Outdoor Partnership, and funded jointly through Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado. Outdoor projects submitted to these entities will use the Plan to help determine alignment and community values as part of their evaluation. The Initiative is also connected to other regional partners and their plans across the state to inform a Statewide Conservation, Recreation, and Climate Resilience Plan by 2026.

#### 4. How does this process relate to the recent Elevate the Peak process in the region?

Elevate the Peak is a planning process that completed in 2022. It was a collaborative effort of outdoor nonprofit organizations in the Pikes Peak region, facilitated by Palmer Land Conservancy. This high-level vision plan is the culmination of stakeholder interviews, public surveys, an economic impact review, and focus groups from the leaders of under-resourced communities. The resulting imperatives and strategies were designed “to inform current and future land conservation and outdoor recreation efforts in the Pikes Peak region.” We intend for it to do just that!

Elevate’s strong emphasis on hearing from local communities that are traditionally underrepresented in the outdoors makes it a particularly valuable complement to OPPI and building block on which to build this Plan. Ensuring that the findings from Elevate and other planning efforts inform OPPI and take it to the next step is key. See the “Goals” section of this web page to learn specific goals to be achieved by this Initiative.

#### 5. What geographic area with this plan cover?

This Initiative is comprised of three counties: El Paso, Teller, and Fremont and chapters of the Plan will more broadly encompass these counties, such as a compilation of what we hear from listening sessions and the distilled priorities for both conservation and recreation.

A “deeper dive” focus for other Plan chapters, including existing plan document analysis and innovative management models, will drill down to a smaller area of interest (AOI) that encompasses Pikes Peak and its related and connected land including parts of four counties: El Paso, Teller, Douglas, and Fremont. A similar multi-jurisdiction plan was launched in 1999, called the Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, with a slightly smaller footprint primarily focused around Pikes Peak. This AOI expands beyond those boundaries to encompass the full USFS Pikes Peak Ranger District, including a small piece at its northern boundary into Douglas County, east through the Colorado Springs WUI (Wildland Urban Interface), south to include portions of Fremont County and west to include Teller County.

#### 6. How can I make sure my voice and viewpoints are heard?

We definitely want to hear from you! We have scheduled Community Listening Sessions for the week of January 23, 2023 in a number of communities across the region. You can attend these in person (recommended) for the best engagement with the information, planning team and Task Force, and other community members. Another option is virtual events which are available immediately following the in-person sessions. We also welcome feedback directly to the OPPI project team (see Get Involved section on this web page) and plan to have a Survey available there as well. We suggest that you sign up for our OPPI E-News to stay in the loop on developments and future ways to connect!

#### 7. What information do you need from me?

We want to know how you value and use the Pikes Peak region’s outdoors and what you want the future to look like. We want to know your aspirations, concerns, and priorities when it comes to our natural environment and special places, as well as what would improve your recreational/outdoor experience. We want to know your ideas on how to increase funding needed to maintain our existing outdoors as well as future upgrades.

8. Is this initiative about trails, camping, or my local neighborhood park?

Yes! All of the above. Through community listening sessions and surveys, we want to know what matters to you – be it trails, types of outdoor use, the need to preserve special places, using your neighborhood park, etc. All of your input is valuable and will be added to other sources of information to help inform the Plan.

The Plan itself is a landscape-level view of the region, however, and will not drill down to the level of adding infrastructure to your local neighborhood park.

9. Will we address elements such as safe drinking water, wildfire threat and prevention, and preserving wildlife habitat?

Yes! These are all very important aspects that definitely need to be part of the conversation and we want to hear your thoughts and concerns on these and other topics. It is a privilege to be able to enjoy the outdoors, but we must be responsible stewards of them as well to ensure long term sustainability for our future.

10. How long is this planning process?

The entire planning process will encompass three years, with the first one completed (2021-2022) and the next phase underway which should complete by the summer of 2024.

11. Will this plan attract funding to fix up trails and parks?

We hope so! This plan is to create an open, honest, transparent, cohesive, and collaborative effort to include ALL affected and invested entities that use or live within the Pikes Peak region. We hope to have a framework of partnerships and structures that benefit all for today and future. We hope for this plan to identify specific funding mechanisms or to be used as a tool to attract funding.

12. Who is leading and participating in this effort?

OPPI has a Task Force of local stakeholders with varying perspectives across recreation and conservation to provide perspective, expertise, and leadership. The PPORA Advisory Council serves as an additional layer of perspective in the planning process. We also established two key partnerships for executing the first phase: the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) and the Colorado Tourism Office. We have engaged in the professional planning services of local consultants, N.E.S. Inc., to provide strategic support and expertise in this important planning process. During the second phase, a significant emphasis is on public engagement to learn from diverse perspectives and experiences to inform the process and help flesh out conservation and recreation priorities. We have hired Bachman PR to help facilitate the public engagement during this second phase.