

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Community-Driven plan released for critical needs of outdoor environment *Plan addresses regional outdoor recreation and conservation priorities across three counties*

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – Following three plus years of community-driven involvement and planning across three counties, the Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative (OPPI) Vision Plan was released today, providing a road map for addressing the Pikes Peak region's outdoor recreation and conservation priorities. Rapid population growth and visitation of the Pikes Peak region, covering El Paso, Fremont, and Teller counties, has had a significant impact on natural resources, recreational experiences, and local communities over the last several years. The plan's vision is to ensure resiliency of public lands, water, wildlife, working farms and ranches, as well as sustainable world class outdoor recreation opportunities for all.

More than 1400 individuals and organizations participated in 19 regional listening sessions and surveys and provided more than 2800 comments that informed the plan. From that involvement, 27 strategies, 62 action items and 30 projects and initiatives rose to the top as regional outdoor priorities. Between 92 and 100% of public feedback indicated general support of the draft plan and its recommendations.

OPPI is spearheaded by the Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (PPORA) as the local Colorado Outdoor Regional Partner with support from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado. The OPPI plan also supports and is supported by Colorado's Outdoors Strategy, released in April: <https://engagecpw.org/cos-learn-more>

"This is a diverse region where fast-growing urban populations are pouring into outdoor spaces, and rural communities seek the economic benefits while preserving their way of life," said Becky Leinweber, executive director of PPORA. "The outdoors is a top reason people choose to live and work here—it's our competitive advantage. The OPPI plan prioritizes strategies and projects that help us provide exceptional recreation opportunities and better manage people and natural resources amid the growing pressure on Pikes Peak and its 'recreation-sheds'."

"Palmer Land Conservancy is excited to be a part of this dynamic effort that highlights critical opportunities to protect our most precious outdoor resources. We applaud the State of Colorado for its leadership in prioritizing conservation and outdoor recreation, and for empowering local organizations to create lasting impact." - Rebecca Jewett, President and CEO, Palmer Land Conservancy.

"The Trails and Open Space Coalition is incredibly excited to have the Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative Plan released. This has been a complex project with multiple stakeholders and PPORA has done a fantastic job of pulling this plan together. This represents substantial progress in managing recreation on an icon of our region, Pikes Peak. Sustainable recreation is an absolute priority and this document will serve us well." – Glenn Carlson, Executive Director, Trails and Open Space Coalition.

One early outcome of OPPI has caught the attention and support of Governor Polis. Management solutions were explored for Pikes Peak which led to a joint Letter of Intent from local and federal land owners and managers committed to “exploring a multi-jurisdictional collaborative solution for sustainable resource management through a long-term agreement for the Ring the Peak trail corridor with Colorado Parks and Wildlife”. Governor Polis highlighted the significance of this collaboration in a January press release, stating, “This is an exciting partnership that will result in higher quality outdoor recreation opportunities that will allow for more people to enjoy the thriving Pikes Peak region, while better conserving America’s Mountain for future generations. This is just the first step in a multi-year plan to improve and expand world-class recreation opportunities like camping, fishing, hiking, and more on the majestic mountain in a way that benefits the landscape, our way of life, and local economy.”

Through the planning process, tools and resources were also developed to better equip the region in ongoing planning for the outdoors:

- Mapping that includes a Pikes Peak Region Conservation Summary and an Areas of Opportunity Map provides credible data to inform decision making
- A Mapping and Project Criteria Framework helps proponents craft better informed and aligned applications to funders and land managers.
- A Data Hub will continue to inform community and outdoor leaders and serves as a “one stop shop” for the region’s outdoor data.
- Analysis and summaries of 93 other regional plans serves as a foundation for the OPPI plan.
- An outdoor industry stakeholder report provides perspective as well as a benchmark for the local industry.
- Analysis and summary of innovative land management models led to OPPI’s management recommendation.

“We are grateful to the many partners who have continued to engage, build relationships, and work together through the last three years of planning work and for exploring innovative solutions for complex challenges, including this one for improved management. The next step will be to determine how to operationally implement the priorities identified through the OPPI planning process,” said Leinweber. “Local investment is key to the success of this initiative. It will require even greater leadership, partnership, collaboration and support to assure sustainable and positive generational impacts for all of us who live, work and play in the Pikes Peak region.”

The public may review and comment on the draft Vision Plan now until June 1 through the OPPI webpage: <https://ppora.org/oppi>

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Background

OUTDOOR PIKES PEAK INITIATIVE (OPPI): <https://ppora.org/oppi>

OPPI involves a diverse task force of land managers, stakeholders and conservation and recreation partners leading the effort across El Paso, Teller, and Fremont counties. The goal was to produce a comprehensive and balanced Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan for the Pikes Peak region. The initiative is one of 21 Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative coalitions formed across the state.

PIKES PEAK OUTDOOR RECREATION ALLIANCE (PPORA) www.ppora.org

The PPORA mission is to strengthen the outdoor recreation industry for the Pikes Peak region through leadership and collaboration. PPORA's work is rooted in 5 pillars: To GROW, INSPIRE, STRENGTHEN, STEWARD, ADVOCATE. For resources to enjoy the outdoors in the Pikes Peak

region, visit www.pikespeakoutdoors.org.

COLORADO OUTDOOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE:

<https://copartnership.org/regional-partnerships>

Funded jointly through Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado, the initiative was created to ensure that Colorado remains a world-class outdoor destination while preserving our land, water, wildlife, and quality of life. Funding is designed to support new and existing coalitions that meet criteria under a State

level Vision and advance development of local and regional planning elements to inform a Statewide Conservation and Recreation Plan.