



NoCo Places

Report

Q3 2023

About NoCo Places

Eight county, state, and federal public land agencies from north-central Colorado are actively collaborating on ways to address the challenges the mountains and foothills in this region are facing from high visitation and a growing population. We are committed to sustainable solutions, equitable actions, and beneficial land management practices for the long-term conservation of Colorado's public lands and the quality of the visitor experience.



The Challenge

Visitation to our mountains and foothills has skyrocketed in recent years, causing congestion on the trails, impacts to wildlife and the environment, and putting at risk what makes Colorado a special place.

Leaders from Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Larimer Counties; Colorado Parks and Wildlife; the US Forest Service Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests; and Rocky Mountain National Park are actively collaborating to address this challenge.

Mission Statement

NoCo Places collaborates to protect and conserve natural and cultural resources while providing equitable access and a quality recreation experience for current and future generations.

Q3 2023 Accomplishments

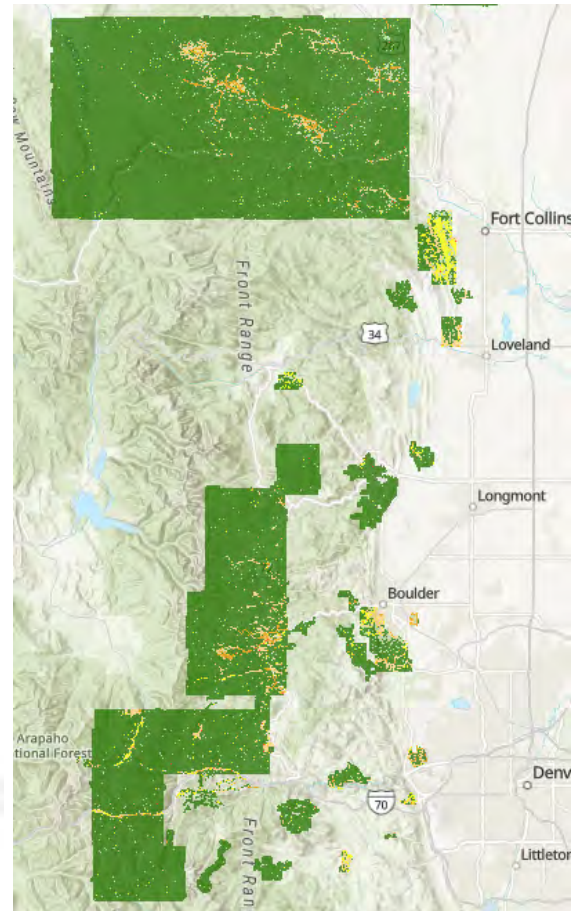
Below is a summary of the work NoCo Places has completed since our [Second Quarter 2023 report](#).

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION VISION

The effort to create a conservation and recreation vision for the NoCo region continued to move forward in the third quarter.

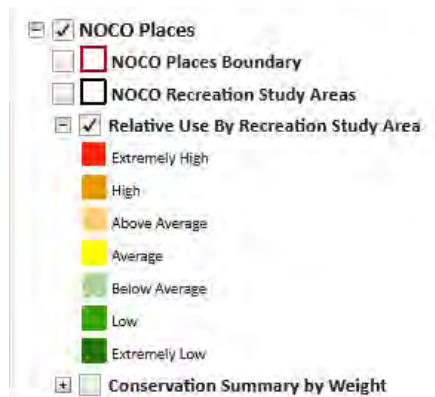
MAPPING:

CNHP and RRC Associates (procurer of mobile phone location data) worked together to overlay the mobile phone location data in the conservation summary map. The data is now a layer that can be toggled on, along with the conservation summary by weight. In September, a workshop was held with NoCo agency staff, CNHP staff, and the representative from RRC Associates to review the data together. The workshop was another step in this multi-part process. The data, and the potential regional opportunities that it represents, remain an ongoing conversation as the conservation and recreation vision comes to life.



Conservation summary map showing layer of mobile phone location data for selection of designated hot spots

[View Mobile Phone Location Dashboard](#)



STORY MAP

We developed a compelling story map that communicates why a conservation and recreation vision is important for the NoCo region, the process we are taking to develop that vision, and includes the CNHP mapping and the mobile phone data analysis. The story map outlines the challenges of the region, how a shared vision can be put into use, the key collaborators involved, and the details of the data.

[View Story Map](#)

[Ver mapa de la historia en Espanol](#)





An interactive slider in the story map allows the viewer to see Horsetooth Reservoir areas of conservation concern on the left, and areas of high visitor use on the right. [View in story map](#)

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The next step in establishing high priority conservation and recreation needs is to hear from stakeholders. During the fall/winter of 2023, NoCo will be conducting 16 stakeholder focus groups that will concentrate on understanding stakeholder perspectives on the trade-offs between conservation and recreation, and management approaches. Additionally, we will be listening to stakeholder input, desires, and values and incorporating them into the vision for the region. The focus groups will utilize the story map to understand the broad picture, as well as view the data collected from multiple sources.



COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS

COMMON MESSAGING

In August, the Communications Subcommittee chose to collaborate on summer-related messages focused on stewardship and safety. Two infographics were developed and shared on social media, websites, and eNewsletters. These infographics, viewable in both English and Spanish, can be found on the NoCo website:

[View Summer Stewardship Infographic](#)

[View Summer Safety Infographic](#)

We will be implementing another common messaging effort in the fall/winter that will also be focused on land stewardship.

Trail Stewardship

How you can care for Colorado's public lands during the summer months

Help Protect Wildlife

How? By staying on trail. Going off trail can negatively affect wildlife like ground-nesting birds, or animals that are hunting or migrating. Download the COTREX app to view designated trails.

Help Protect the Land

Using unofficial trails can create erosion (they are unsustainably built), tramples critical flora and wildlife habitat, and hampers search and rescue efforts in emergencies.

Help Protect Your Trails

Walk through mud, not around it. When you try to avoid mud by walking around the trail, you end up widening the trail, damaging flowering plants and grasses beside the trail, and causing erosion.

Help Keep Public Lands for Everyone

Practice Leave No Trace principles. Pick up trash and food, leave flowers for all to enjoy, share the trail, and respect wildlife.

Help Protect Our Water Systems

Pick up dog waste and pack it out with you*. Dog waste does not naturally biodegrade due to the ingredients in dog food. Additionally, dog waste often contains harmful bacteria like E. coli that washes into streams and rivers.

*Know which public lands allow dogs on trails

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Photo Credits: Arnie Friani, Carol Beani, Brad Winkelman, Stephen Hauptli

SUMMER SAFETY

Stay Safe During the Colorado Summer

Know before you go and prepare for what comes with being outdoors during the summer in Colorado. Learn water, fire, and weather safety tips.

1 Water Safety:

Know how to be safe on Colorado's lakes and rivers

- Wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD)
- Dress for weather; storms form quickly
- Keep safety equipment on your vessel at all times

Stand Up Paddleboarders:

Yes, even you need a PFD. Carry a whistle to be heard in an emergency and wear bright colors to be seen easily.

Boaters:

Take a boating safety class, have your boat inspected for nuisance species, and have enough life jackets for everyone on board.

FLASH FLOOD SAFETY

- While on trail, identify the flood safety route. Climb to higher ground if flash flood occurs.
- Keep your eyes on the sky! You may not be able to receive text messages, alerts, or hear sirens.
- Leave the area if storm clouds are building
- Tim around, don't drown. The road may not be intact under floodwaters.

RIVER SAFETY

Tell someone where you're going

Wear a life jacket

Stay away from riverbanks during high flowing water, the bank could be unstable and give way.

Stay clear of floating debris, and avoid dams and slippery rocks/logs along shore

Check river and stream conditions before heading out

If caught in fast flowing river or storm water, try to float feet first in a half sit position

2 Fire Safety:

High heat and drought conditions can lead to trouble—fast.

- Always check regulations and fire bans on public lands
- Learn how to put a campfire dead out
- Know smoking restrictions
- Fireworks are not permitted on Forest Range public lands.

Don't be responsible for starting a wildfire

89% of wildfires were human caused by the U.S. between 2017-2021.

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Did You Know?

Even the smallest spark can start a big fire. Avoid parking or driving on dry grass, and don't let trailer chains drag.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

If a wildfire started in a park would you know your exit route?

Take a map with you into a park, or download the COTREX trail app. Know alternate routes in case you need to evacuate.

PUT A CAMPFIRE DEAD OUT

Even buried warm coals can start a fire

- Drown the campfire ashes with water
- Stir, add more water, and stir again.
- Even if you don't see embers, winds can easily re-ignite and spread an unattended campfire.
- If it's too hot to touch, it's too hot to leave.

3 Weather Safety:

500,000

Number of lightning strikes to the ground in an average year in Colorado.

Based on data since 2016, lightning causes 2 fatalities and 12 injuries per year in the State of Colorado.

BACKCOUNTRY LIGHTNING

AVOID:

- Mountain tops and ridges
- Cliffs and rocky overhangs
- Wide, open areas including lakes
- Creeks and boggy ground
- Tall isolated trees

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING DURING A STORM

Metal Tent Poles

When tent camping in the backcountry, keep an extra pole or tent leg away from your tent and try to relocate to a groove of forest.

Relocate from Tent

If camping in an exposed area during a storm, get out and away from your tent and try to relocate to a groove of forest.

Stay Away from Water

If camping near a body of water, try to relocate to a groove of forest away from the body of water.

Lightning is hotter than the surface of the sun and can reach temperatures around:

50,000 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT

Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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BRAND REFRESH

The NoCo Communications Subcommittee recommended the following changes to the NoCo name and associated messaging to better align with the coalition's goals and current efforts:

- Addition of tagline, "A common voice for public lands"
- Change "PLACES" to lowercase "Places" without an association to an acronym
- Remove "2050" and add space between NoCo Places
- Slight redesign and simplification of logo

These changes were approved by the Executive Committee.



COTREX APP MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Joseph O'Brien, the new State Trails Project Coordinator at Colorado Parks and Wildlife, is now on board and responsible for the COTREX app management and updates. In the next few months, Joseph will be setting up conversations with NoCo Places and other regional partnership groups to talk through what they want to see added or changed in COTREX. This information will be used to build a roadmap of future updates in the app.

Additionally, the state will be looking to streamline the process for data updates in COTREX, and making marketing a priority. A new marketing plan will be drafted by January 2024 and shared with NoCo Places and other RPIs. A planned promotional push will take place in the spring of 2024 and this will be another opportunity for NoCo Places to coordinate and spread the messaging.







Tackling Goals

We will achieve our goals by:

- **Inspiring an outdoor stewardship ethic** among visitors and recreationists that promotes an awareness of their impact on the land and wildlife, reduces those impacts by educating them on how they can mitigate or manage them, and creates a personal sense of ownership, responsibility and pride in better protecting those resources.
- **Building community support for increased funding** for public land management, and exploring opportunities and mechanisms for sharing financial resources across jurisdictions in the NoCo region.
- **Increasing the amount of conserved and/or restored land**, and protecting the land that is already conserved and/or restored.
- **Supporting outdoor recreation and visitation** in areas best suited for that activity.
- **Improving the quality of the visitor experience**, particularly in areas facing the greatest threats from overuse and congestion, through management approaches, education, more effective infrastructure and other means.
- **Ensuring that the region continues to provide and support a wide range** of quality outdoor experience opportunities.
- **Increasing the visitation by historically underrepresented communities** and Americans with Disabilities Act/Architectural Barriers Act (ADA/ABA) communities.
- **Reducing conflict and promoting compatibility among visitors** and recreational use types, and increasing the safety of outdoor experiences.

Upcoming

After a year of work building a conservation and recreation vision for the NoCo region, 2024 will be focused on incorporating feedback from the stakeholder outreach focus groups, finalizing the vision, and implementing the vision per agency and NoCo collectively.

 www.nocoplaces.com
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Visit website for information on core topics, research, and downloadable materials