



Recreation in the Outdoors

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Phase 1: Aligning Vision, Establishing Priorities, Creating Capacity


CLEAR CREEK COUNTY
COLORADO
December 2023

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Acknowledgements

The development of the *Clear Creek County Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan - Phase 1 - Aligning Vision, Establishing Priorities, Creating Capacity* would not have been possible without the grant funding support from great outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the contributions of time and insight from members of the public, and agency and organizational staff, and leadership from Clear Creek County Board of County Commissioners.

An **interagency team** consisting of staff from the following agencies and departments provided instrumental guidance in steering the planning process:

- City of Idaho Springs
- Town of Georgetown
- Town of Empire
- Town of Silver Plume
- Clear Creek County
- Clear Creek County Metropolitan Recreation District
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Georgetown/Silver Plume Historic Landmark District Public Lands Commission (HDPLC)
- US Forest Service

Two community advisory groups – a **Planning Partners Team** and a **Community Advisory Team** – supplied critically important ideas and perspectives that directly informed the conservation principles and recreation management strategies presented in this plan.

Lastly, a note of thanks to all County residents that provided information and feedback to the project team by participating in a community survey. Your experiences, perspectives, and ideas were invaluable to development of this plan.

PROJECT TEAM



Table of Contents

Preface.....	3
About This Document	4
Executive Summary	8
Chapter 1. Management Principles	13
Conservation & Sustainability	13
Chapter 2. Recreation Management Priority: Trail Systems	16
Priority 1: Trail System Evaluation.....	16
Priority 2: High-Use Trails	19
Priority 3: Use-Specific Trail Considerations	22
Chapter 3. Recreation Management Priority: River Access & Recreation.....	25
Chapter 4. Recreation Management Priority: Destination & Visitor Mgmt	28
Chapter 5. Recreation Management Priority: Recreation Economy Planning.....	32
Chapter 6. Recreation Management Framework: Adaptive Management	35
Adaptive Management Framework.....	35
Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability in Recreation Management.....	38
Collaborative Approach to Management & The Role of the ROMP.....	38
Chapter 7. Next Steps: Future Projects	40
Chapter 8. Next Steps: Ongoing Management.....	42
The Role of Clear Creek County	42
Interagency Recreation Group	42
Stakeholder Engagement.....	43
Additional Community Communications and Involvement	44



Preface

The beauty and proximity of Clear Creek County has made it a popular destination for decades. County leaders have long known that decreasing revenues and increasing visitation is a math problem that is not sustainable. The County has been working on recreation management and planning for decades, starting with the important step approved by voters in 2001 creating the Open Space fund. This was followed by investing in the 2017 *Community Master Plan*, the formation of the County Trails Crew, and the formation in 2020 of the County Recreation Department.

The *Clear Creek County Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan* is a necessary and logical next step to bring that prior work and the community together to build a defining recreation plan that is a force for good in our county.

The mountains and creek that define this valley are home. We know this is a place where lots of people want to come to explore. As leaders we are responsible for creating a thriving economy and we welcome the visitors that contribute to this end. We also know, more than anything, Clear Creek County is a place worth protecting, and we bear that responsibility as well. This plan is offered as a tool that will allow us to do both better, together.



About This Document

WHY OUTDOOR RECREATION MANAGEMENT?

Outdoor recreation management is a broad term that, for some communities, can include facilities, ballfields, or land and resource management. This plan and process is focused on assessing existing outdoor recreation amenities in natural environments, especially Clear Creek County's trails and creek. It also focuses on the forces that impact those amenities and how use and visitation at those amenities interacts to affect communities, neighborhoods, the economy and the environment. This is Phase 1 of what will be at least a two-part planning process and an ongoing concern for the community. Outdoor recreation management is about having the systems and goals in place to predict and respond to the interactions and impacts of visitation in a collaborative, coordinated way across the multiple land managers with jurisdiction in Clear Creek County. This project will focus on creating an aligned vision for the entities involved in managing outdoor recreation and identifying outdoor recreation management priorities.

PURPOSE OF THE ROMP

The Clear Creek County Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan (ROMP) creates an aligned vision for outdoor recreation that enriches local communities and welcomes a diverse range of visitors in a way that protects and improves the integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources for the long term.

The ROMP is informed by the shared values and diverse perspectives of community members, stakeholders, other agency partners, and County staff and leadership. It provides a roadmap to guide and coordinate future outdoor recreation management and planning in the county.

This document describes the work done in Phase 1 to establish an aligned vision, identify priorities and initial steps to create capacity for ongoing recreation management. Later, in Phase 2, more detailed planning and implementation work will continue, adding detail for things like continued planning, project identification, feasibility and funding analysis to the vision and priority identification work described here.

ROMP INPUTS AND PROCESS

The development of the *Clear Creek County Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan- Phase 1* took place over eighteen months, between early summer 2022 and fall 2023. The development process included a multi-jurisdictional, interactive effort to engage the community and understand the existing plans, data, and perspectives associated with outdoor recreation and outdoor



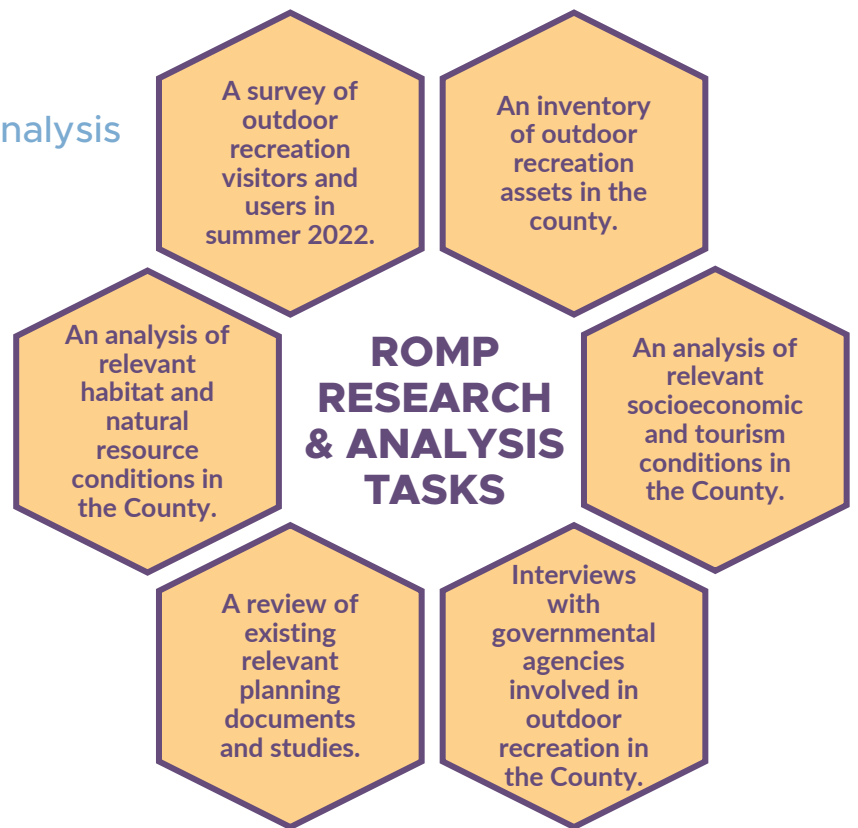
recreation management in Clear Creek County. A brief overview of some of the input and process steps is provided below.

Process Step: Research & Analysis

An early step in the process involved the inventorying and analysis of existing information to understand current conditions related to outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County. This step involved several research and outreach tasks.

Input: Collaboration Teams

Throughout the *ROMP* development process, three collaborative teams were engaged to provide insights and input into the development of the vision, goals, and priorities.



- ♦ **Interagency Team:** A committee of County, municipal, federal and state partners with land management authorities within Clear Creek County that met approximately monthly throughout the process. The collaboration of the Interagency Team provides the foundation for future phases of project implementation.
- ♦ **Planning Partners Team:** A multi-stakeholder group with subject matter expertise on recreation planning, such as open space planning; cultural and historical resources; youth engagement; economic/business/tourism; recreational uses (motorized and non-motorized, winter and summer, land and water); outdoor equity; environmental conservation; land management agencies; etc. The team met eight times to provide input into vision, goals, and priorities.
- ♦ **Community Advisory Team:** A group reflecting the diversity of community members that will be impacted by and providing essential community input into the plan. The team served as a focus group to understand broader community perspectives and to inform and react to ideas from other teams, meeting three times during *ROMP* development. The team also served as a network of community liaisons to help convey information about the process, including survey/input opportunities, to the community at large.

Input: Community Survey

Another early step in the ROMP development effort was an online community survey conducted to inform the values and priorities of the plan. 385 residents of Clear Creek County participated in the survey, which explored issues such as:

- ◆ Desired changes, enhancements, or improvements to outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County.
- ◆ The impact of Clear Creek County's role as an outdoor recreation destination upon residents' quality of life.
- ◆ Priorities related to enhanced protection/conservation of natural resources; enhanced management and/or quality of existing recreation opportunities and amenities to reduce conflict and resource degradation; and/or additional recreational opportunities and amenities.

Multiple choice and qualitative responses were correlated across the questions above (for example, whether a respondent felt that Clear Creek's role as an outdoor recreation destination affected them positively, negatively, or neutrally was correlated with their desired changes and priorities). Responses were also correlated to the respondents' frequency of recreation and residence locations within Clear Creek County (for example, in a municipality, in an unincorporated area near a popular recreation amenity, or elsewhere). Although the survey was not a statistically sampled survey of residents, the correlations across questions and an analysis of the qualitative data provided important insights into the perspectives of various cohorts of community members, including those that generally felt positively or negatively impacted by outdoor recreation.

Input: County Leadership

In addition to the inputs and process steps described above, the ROMP received input from County leaders, including the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), collected at public commission meetings throughout the development process.

Supporting Documents

As outputs of the research and analysis task and the community survey, respectively, the following reports were produced:

- ◆ **Research Summary: Clear Creek County, CO Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan, April 2023** (produced by SE Group), summarizes findings and takeaways that provided a baseline of information for identification of ROMP priorities and continues to provide a baseline of data and information that can support future planning associated with those priorities.
- ◆ **Community Values Report: Clear Creek County Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan, May 2023** (produced by Keystone Policy Center) summarizes findings and key takeaways on perspectives of community members regarding outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County.



ROMP ROADMAP

The diverse range of perspectives described above enabled the development of this report and its content. Further, ROMP development was funded by a generous grant from Great Outdoors Colorado. Both the grant and the development process envisioned the ROMP as a critical first step and roadmap toward the identification and implementation of specific strategies and projects. Accordingly, the ROMP provides Clear Creek County and its partners with robust, actionable community-informed recreation management priorities, multiple strategies to address them, and an adaptive management framework to use to support the future design, implementation, and monitoring of projects and initiatives intended to achieve the ROMP's vision and goals.



Executive Summary

The Recreation in the Outdoors Management Plan (ROMP) rests on a foundation of community. The vision and project goals generated by stakeholders reflect a broad-based perspective and love of the land and the people who live and play on it.

VISION & GOALS

ROMP VISION STATEMENT

Outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County enriches local communities and welcomes a diverse range of visitors in a way that protects and improves the integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources for the long term.

CLEAR CREEK COUNTY WILL **MAINTAIN** AND **CONTINUE TO BUILD UPON:**

- ◆ The integrity and preservation of **natural and cultural resources**
- ◆ An **authentic mountain culture** and **high quality of life** for residents
- ◆ A **vibrant local economy** supported by outdoor recreation.
- ◆ A wide variety of **high-quality recreation opportunities** desired by and accessible to local residents and visitors.
- ◆ Resilient recreational amenities that **reduce resource impacts and user conflicts**
- ◆ A clearly communicated expectation that **visitors will plan ahead to recreate safely and responsibly.**

ROMP ROADMAP

This report identifies recreation management priorities, implementation strategies, an adaptive management framework, and a structure for ongoing engagement that are informed by hundreds of hours of conversation with collaborative teams and agency leads; review of dozens of past reports; and engagement with community members online and through focus groups.

GUIDING MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLE: CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Conservation and **sustainability** were recurring themes of concern for stakeholders, community focus groups and survey respondents, and land managers. The ROMP embeds these as foundational concepts, identifying core principles to apply to the management of existing and new recreational amenities and focusing on conservation and sustainability within each recreation management priority.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PRIORITY: TRAIL SYSTEMS

Across uses, jurisdictions, and landowners, Clear Creek County's trails are a defining aspect of outdoor recreation in the minds of residents and visitors alike. The trails to Mt. Bierstadt and Mt. Blue Sky (Evans) are among the most popular in the County, drawing visitors throughout the Front Range, the state, and perhaps the region. In addition to these high-use recreation destinations, other lands and trails within Clear Creek County support a wide range of trail-based activities, including walking, hiking, cycling, and OHV use.

Trails and trailheads often cross or buttress multiple private and public lands jurisdictions, making interagency coordination, communication, and collaboration an important factor in the success of natural resource management. To appropriately manage the County's trail system in alignment with the ROMP's conservation and sustainability principles, a combination of strategies should be employed to meet the needs of the trails system, multiple uses, and high-use areas.

KEY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- ◆ Evaluate systems-scale status and management needs for trails and associated amenities in Clear Creek County; coordinate on trails systems evaluation and management across jurisdictions within the County.
- ◆ Address high use at 14,000-foot peaks ("14ers") and other high-use sites.
- ◆ Address use-specific needs and develop an OHV Management Plan.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PRIORITY: RIVER ACCESS AND RECREATION

Clear Creek is becoming an increasingly popular destination for rafting, fishing, and other river-based recreational uses. Clear Creek's proximity to Front Range communities, its significant downward slope, and hydromorphology make it especially attractive to commercial operators who provide rafting experiences to the general public. Rafting on Clear Creek creates economic opportunities for local businesses that are proximal to key staging areas and access points to the Creek.

Like other rivers in the southwest, the annual viability of recreation on Clear Creek is vulnerable to drought conditions, which impact both recreation and wildlife habitat. There is a need to improve the permitting process for the benefit of river users, adjacent communities, and commercial rafting operators by prioritizing coordination among permit providers.

KEY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- ◆ Promote conservation improvements and mitigate environmental impacts
- ◆ Evaluate rafting and recreation on Clear Creek.
- ◆ Develop an adaptive framework for the management of access points on Clear Creek.
- ◆ Coordinate permitting administration among river access providers.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PRIORITY: DESTINATION AND VISITOR MANAGEMENT

For many years and particularly since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, there have been increases in outdoor recreation-driven tourism challenges. These challenges have been acute for unincorporated Clear Creek residents who live near popular recreation destinations and are impacted by traffic, parking, noise, trash/waste, and visitor conflict.

Additionally, increased outdoor recreation tourism presents a challenge to natural resources, especially where sensitive areas are experiencing higher volumes of visitation and/or use does not reflect responsible recreation values, experience, or awareness. Destination management strategies fostering visitor education and stewardship can mitigate negative impacts to quality of life, minimize environmental degradation, and improve quality of recreation experience.

KEY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- ◆ Strengthen destination management including responsible tourism.
- ◆ Incorporate transportation solutions into recreation management.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT PRIORITY: RECREATION ECONOMY PLANNING

The intersection of recreation and economic development is not without tension. At the same time, there is awareness that increased recreation can create economic opportunities. Outdoor recreation



planning should diversify and grow Clear Creek County's economic portfolio without compromising all that is strong about the character and culture of life in Clear Creek County. Planning should prioritize opportunities that benefit local residents of the County in long-term, sustainable job creation, positive economic impacts to local businesses, and tax revenue for the County, while minimizing negative impacts to environment and resident quality of life.

Moreover, recreation economy planning, which would include recreation-focused economic development, should align with destination management strategies, consider variability in community support for promoting recreation tourism, and the capacity of local businesses to leverage additional recreation traffic for economic benefit.

KEY STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- ◆ Identify models of balanced local and tourist culture that exemplify Clear Creek's goals for recreation economy planning.
- ◆ Evaluate and create recreational opportunities for their ability to contribute to ecological and socioeconomic sustainability and cultural, community strength.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Recreation management priorities will be supported by an adaptive management¹ framework. This framework serves as an overall management approach, centers an equitable relationship among local communities and natural and cultural resources, and encourages collaboration among land management agencies in the County.

ADAPTIVE RECREATION MANAGEMENT DEFINED

Adaptive management is an approach to recreation management that balances public input, up to-date data and information, and established management priorities. It is intended to increase the ability to fashion timely responses in the face of new information and in a setting of varied stakeholder objectives and preferences. It should help stakeholders, managers, elected officials and other decision makers recognize the limits of knowledge and the need to act on imperfect information. Adaptive management is not simply a "trial and error" process, but rather represents a more systematic "learning while doing."

¹ The adaptive management principles used by the ROMP are based on the framework prepared by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council, a collaborative of six federal land management agencies: <https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/VUM/VumOverview>

ONGOING MANAGEMENT

An **interagency team** will continue to play an important role in decision-making and informing the implementation of the ROMP. The establishment of a structured team comprised of **federal, state, municipal, and special district partners** will support the County's implementation of an adaptive management framework, recreation management priorities, and identified strategies and offer opportunities for continued collaboration, cross-jurisdictional coordination, capacity, and evaluation within and beyond the scope of the ROMP.



Chapter 1.

Management Principles

CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY

The ROMP, in all phases, will rely on a collaborative and adaptive approach to outdoor recreation management. That approach will be based on a set of shared principles related to the conservation and sustainability of the lands and resources that support all the outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County. Based on feedback from County leaders, residents, recreation partners, land managers, and visitors, the following management principles were identified to inform decision making around existing outdoor recreation offerings and those that may be developed or provided in the future.

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING RECREATIONAL AMENITIES:

- ◆ **Conservation** should focus on areas of significant fragility and risk (e.g., high altitude wetlands) and/or critical connectivity (i.e., for wildlife corridors and/or climate resilience).
- ◆ Prioritize trail and recreation system management and maintenance **within available resources** and consistent with community needs before expansion or addition of new trails and amenities.
- ◆ Consider both **regional and site-specific needs** and priorities for management to support conservation and sustainability.
- ◆ Use **best maintenance and management practices** for trail sustainability and wildlife/habitat needs as well as tools such as wildlife closures and management strategies such as directional flow, speed, use type restrictions, reservation systems, etc.
- ◆ Consider capacity and specific opportunities for **visitor use management approaches** and hardening (as appropriate) for high use recreation locations, trails, trailheads, and amenities.
- ◆ Consider the **additional infrastructure and facilities** needed to support sustainable recreation at existing sites (e.g., bathrooms, trash receptacles, etc.)
- ◆ Consider opportunities for enforcement/closure or (infrequently) adoption/improvement of **unauthorized trails** in specific contexts; apply a high level of scrutiny to assess potential benefits and/or impacts of trail adoption, with a strong preference for closure unless there is a clear benefit for addressing other systems needs or other partner willing to manage the asset.
- ◆ **Educate users** on best practices for coexistence of recreation and conservation; implement destination management approaches.
- ◆ Consider opportunities for **transportation solutions** to minimize traffic and parking issues.
- ◆ Consider **cross-jurisdictional partnership** and coordination opportunities for management.

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING POTENTIAL NEW AMENITIES:

- ◆ **WHEN:** New trails and recreational amenities should be considered *after* opportunities and needs for maintaining and managing existing opportunities have been assessed and/or addressed.
- ◆ **WHY:** The purpose, need, and benefits (*what and for whom*) for new amenities should be clear; on a system-wide and site-specific basis, evaluate:
 - The potential social, economic, and/or environmental benefits
 - Community and visitor experiences and expectations for recreational opportunities
 - The purpose, recreational use type, accessibility, and difficulty level of recreational offerings within the broader offerings in the County
- ◆ **WHO:** Consider the audience, who is the amenity for, who will it serve? How will this new amenity support, strengthen or otherwise impact the local community, the culture?
- ◆ **WHERE:** Consider the tradeoffs and unintended site-specific and systems-wide consequences of where new projects might be located, including:
 - What is the effect of potential new construction on the total visitation and individual or cumulative impacts of recreation in the area? If a new project is or is not undertaken in one area, how might that impact visitation in other areas?
 - What are the possible effects of a potential project on the whole ecological-recreation system, including the implications of increased connectivity, access, and use/use types for habitat, wildlife, cultural resources, and human communities?
 - How would the location of a project affect fragmentation of wildlife habitat blocks? Assess trail and recreational amenity density and its impacts for fragmentation.
 - Consider the need for seasonal closures for wildlife in specific areas.
- ◆ **HOW:** Consider how new opportunities, if provided, would most appropriately be implemented given conservation, sustainability, cultural, and community considerations and priorities:
 - Construction should observe best practices to reduce the long-term need for maintenance.
 - Consider how the trails and access infrastructure would be constructed to allow for and influence carrying capacity. For example, does the size of the parking lot reflect the capacity of the trail? Is the size of the parking lot intended to limit overall use?
 - Consider strategies, in addition to construction, which can be applied to manage amenities consistent with capacity analyses and overall conservation and community goals; for example, strategies such as directional flow, speed, use type, reservation systems, etc., can assist with management.



- Identify and mitigate through construction, management, education and enforcement potential impacts on habitat, wildlife, sensitive areas, cultural resources, and local communities and neighborhoods.
- Implementation should involve coordination across land managing agencies, being responsive to their missions; and with the community, leveraging the efforts of volunteers.
- Assess both the construction costs and life-cycle maintenance costs of new projects; consider the ability to address long-term costs and staff capacity requirements.

Chapter 2.

Recreation Management Priority: Trail Systems

Across uses and jurisdictions, Clear Creek County's trails are a defining aspect of outdoor recreation in the minds of residents and visitors alike. The trails to Mt. Bierstadt and Mt. Blue Sky (Evans) are among the most popular in the County, drawing visitors throughout the Front Range, the state, and perhaps the region. In addition to high-use recreation destinations, Clear Creek supports a wide range of use types, including walking, hiking, cycling, and OHV use.

Trails and trailheads often cross or buttress multiple private and public lands jurisdictions, making the efficacy of interagency coordination, communication, and collaboration an important factor in the success of natural resource management. To appropriately manage the County's trail system in alignment with the ROMP's conservation and sustainability principles, a combination of strategies are offered to meet the needs of the trails system, multiple uses, and high use areas.

PRIORITY 1: TRAIL SYSTEM EVALUATION

Trail system designers and managers need to operate both as land managers responsible for a specific jurisdiction and as collaborators, operating with the mutual interests of their neighbors in mind. A system-wide evaluation of the County's network of trails should provide a foundation for future collaborative, cross-jurisdictional trail system management and for informed trail system management by individual jurisdictions.

This evaluation will help identify trends and needs related to recreational trail uses, their impacts, and consistent management responses for similar issues across geographies and jurisdictions, including environmental degradation, impacts to wildlife and habitat, and impacts to visitor experience and residential quality of life.



Strategy 1a: Evaluate systems-scale status and management needs for trails and associated amenities in Clear Creek County

- i. Evaluate the existing Clear Creek County trails network** to understand current trail assets, uses and use types, conditions and needs as well as the intersection of the current trails systems with natural and cultural resources and socioeconomic considerations for county residents. This evaluation should include trailhead amenities such as parking lots, bathrooms, and trash receptacles. It should consult both existing and emerging data sources on trail system conditions and needs:

 - a. ROMP project reports, including the April 2023 ROMP Research Summary containing information about trail miles, uses, and trail use counts and 2023 ROMP Community Values report discussing perspectives on key issues and needs, and spatial data and tools.
 - b. Relevant spatial data tools for further analysis of the trails system include the Colorado Trail Explorer (COTREX), The Nature Conservancy’s Resilient and Connected Landscapes Tool, anticipated species and habitat inventories and weighted map layered developed in partnership with Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) and NoCO PLACES 2050, recreational mobile phone data purchased and analyzed in partnership with NoCo PLACES 2050, Colorado Parks and Wildlife data and corridor mapping tools, and the Colorado Ownership, Management and Protection (COMaP) layer. Many of these spatial data layers and tools are found within the Colorado Data Explorer (CODEX) and can be further leveraged using CODEX reporting functions.
- ii. Identify specific trail management needs and priorities and develop an adaptive trail management framework** using the evaluation of the trail system and ROMP Management Principles. This should include the identification of indicators of trail usage and quality that can be monitored to periodically evaluate and adjust management strategies and actions.

 - a. Taking this step will enable adaptive management benefits, such as identifying more subtle distinctions between different trail sectors that have unique needs and opportunities, conflicts, and threats, like the “approach” areas where local and federal lands connect.
 - b. It will also serve as a framework for local land managers to make trails network management decisions, such as managing unauthorized trails and addressing/enhancing system access and connectivity for different uses.

Strategy 1b: Coordinate on trails systems evaluation and management across jurisdictions within the County

- i. Evaluate and prioritize addressing system-wide needs and implement near-term management actions in coordination with an interagency group to support collaboration on trail system management across jurisdictions (see also *Next Steps: Ongoing Management*).
- ii. Coordinate trail system management with destination management and transportation activities (see *Recreation Management Priority: Destination and Visitor Management* for additional detail).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: Trail System Evaluation	
2024 MILESTONES	Define evaluation project plan and key stakeholders for project implementation
KEY PARTNERS	U.S. Forest Service, municipal land and trail managers, the Historic District Public Lands Commission
FUTURE PROJECTS	Begin mapping efforts to support trails system evaluation projects, assess unauthorized trails, conduct trail systems gap analysis, define systems-wide destination management approaches
FUNDING	State and/or regional grants, cost-share initiatives with listed partners, fee systems at amenities or for trail use.
SUCCESS DEFINED	Land managers have the resources they need to make trails network decisions rooted in adaptive management principles and informed by broad understanding of the entire multi-jurisdictional trails network.



PRIORITY 2: HIGH-USE TRAILS

Clear Creek County trails attract hundreds of thousands of enthusiastic visitors, with its famous peaks drawing international attention. This high level of visitation creates significant challenges, which can include environmental degradation, negative impacts to visitors' recreation experiences, inadequately sized trailhead amenities, poor human waste management, and/or strained capacity (e.g., on the trail and in the parking lot).

In some cases, these impacts can cause greater spillover of impacts to neighboring communities including due to traffic and parking issues. Concentrated one-way and bidirectional traffic reduces accessibility and creates safety concerns for visitors and first responders for some trails. Additionally, the unique habitats of some high use areas create a direct conflict between use and natural resource stewardship. Most importantly, consider the nexus of the County and other land managers at local approach sites to high use areas as the focus of implementation for the following strategies.

Strategy 2a: Mitigate high use at 14,000-foot peaks (“14ers”)

- i. **Capitalize on positive relations with U.S. Forest Service and other relevant land managers so an adaptive management framework will be able to address site-specific management needs that foster collaborative solutions at local approach areas.** Collaborative adaptive solutions would include systems such as shuttles, reservations, or paid parking strategies. Consider differences for site-specific management needs and considerations; for example, Mt. Bierstadt is in federally designated wilderness and needs trail maintenance; Grays and Torreys' trail is hardened and can withstand higher visitation; both have issues with trail amenities such as parking and toilets. A critical component of adaptive management for the 14ers will be a monitoring strategy that includes indicators of trail use and quality.
- ii. **Ensure that land managers responsible for Clear Creek County's high use peaks and surrounding lands are informed by the ongoing statewide best practices, like the 14ers Centennial Visioning process.** This separate Visioning effort seeks to develop a shared vision for Colorado's 14,000-foot-peaks (14ers); it is supported by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), led by National Forest Foundation, the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, and other partners. Engage Clear Creek community members to support and inform the statewide effort with community-level feedback; ensure the statewide vision supports the Clear Creek community's vision and values for its four 14ers, Mt. Bierstadt, Mt. Blue Sky (Evans), and Grays and Torreys.

Strategy 2b: Mitigate conflicts at other high-use sites

Other high-use sites include Herman's Gulch, Silver Dollar Lake, West Chicago Creek, Jones Pass, Berthoud Pass, and Chief Mountain. In collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service for trails on forest system lands, consider County and USFS planning priorities, zones, and principles to:

- i. Conduct site-specific evaluation of existing assets to identify goals for trail and amenity repair and enhancement.**
 - a. Leverage existing resources to identify where trails need to be hardened and/or amenities are in need of improvement.
 - b. Address signage, parking, bathrooms, and trail maintenance; prioritize the most impacted first several miles of trails.
- ii. Apply an adaptive management approach to identify and address existing and potential high use areas.**
 - a. Develop a trail use and impact monitoring strategy. Indicators of trail use and impacts could include trail use volumes, frequency of emergency service requests, trailhead parking occupancy, natural resource impacts documented by periodic field surveys, and other measurable factors that could be monitored on a periodic or ongoing basis. Define management actions at indicating "thresholds" for changes in monitored conditions in the field.
 - b. Coordinate and align adaptive management approaches across jurisdictions, applying to each site as appropriate.
- iii. Enhance education and community outreach to support visitation best practices and to support positive visitor experiences on Continental Divide Trail crossings and other areas popular with visitors; use shuttles and other options for high use trails (see also *Destination and Visitor Management*)**
 - a. Assess where visitors are currently receiving their information.
- iv. Where possible and appropriate, concentrate use at existing high use sites and make them more resilient to increased use, rather than spreading uses to other trails. Strategies to support concentration of use may include hardened trails, improved trailhead amenities (parking, signage and education, bathrooms, trash receptacles, etc.) and transportation strategies.**



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: High-Use Trails	
2024 MILESTONES	Identify alignment and coordination with CO 14ers initiative and other Centennial 14er Visioning partners; identify funding sources to address other high use sites
KEY PARTNERS	USFS, Denver Mountain Parks, CPW, CFI, CDTC, and other stakeholders (public and private) with federal land nexus near high use areas.
FUTURE PROJECTS	Create capacity for collaboration and situational conflict mitigation, enhance (e.g., harden) infrastructure where appropriate.
FUNDING	GOCO, CPW trails program; State trails grants for 2023-24; USFS grant opportunities
SUCCESS DEFINED	Conflicts at local approach areas are addressed; signage and information systems are aligned between County, federal, state, etc. partners.



PRIORITY 3: USE-SPECIFIC TRAIL CONSIDERATIONS

Clear Creek County's steep sided valley is crisscrossed with old mining roads and trails. The large percentage of public lands means it is ideal for a wide variety of trail uses, such as OHVs, mountain bikes, hikers, and even road cyclists. This breadth of use means a breadth of challenges including inconsistent policies, enforcement, visitor/recreationalist communication and education strategies across multiple jurisdictions. Each use type brings specific environmental impacts such as waste and erosion, impacts to residents such as trespassing and nuisance, and enhanced potential for conflicts between users.

Similar to systems-wide trail planning, limited recreation management capacity and multiple land management jurisdictions requires a collaborative approach to addressing use-specific management needs across land management agencies throughout the County. Among other use types, OHV uses and impacts were identified during the ROMP development process as important issues to address for elected officials, recreators, and members of the Clear Creek County community. Although use-specific management needs and strategies should be considered for all use types, including hiking, cycling, mountain biking, and other trail use types, OHV management is of elevated concern for many.

Strategy 3a: Define Management Strategies for various recreational user types

- i. **Define management approaches for multiple use types:** include vision, communication principles and enforcement practices, signage and wayfinding, and best land use allocation practices for each use type. Additional wayfinding information, such as difficulty level for each trail, would improve existing experiences in addition to enhanced amenities (see also Trails Systems Evaluation and High Use Trails).
 - a. **Evaluate issues and opportunities for hiking, cycling, mountain biking, climbing access, and other use types on trails.** Create focused management plans for complex issues (see 3b below). Apply the management principles for conservation and sustainability; findings from systems-wide trail assessment; and evaluation criteria for natural and cultural resources, economic, and social/community benefits and impacts to determine which uses are desired, where, and with what management of existing and/or potential trails or amenities. Evaluate the need for strategies to reduce user conflict, such as separating trails by use type and establishing direction-specific trails. Also, evaluate the potential to optimize trails for their intended uses, such as by incorporating bike-specific structures into bike-specific trails.
 - b. **Evaluate issues and opportunities for other use types on roads,** for example road bikes. Clear Creek County welcomes road cyclists who are cross-country cyclists. That route is a combination of share-the-road striped bike lanes, separated bike paths



on Greenway sections, and sections of highway without striping for bikes. The route is not well marked. There are few wayfinding signs, and no kiosks for this user group. Safety and quality of experience for road cyclists could be improved with kiosks and wayfinding.

Strategy 3b: Develop a Management Plan for OHV use

- i. **Define a vision for OHV management across jurisdictions in the County** and support dialogues that engage diverse perspectives to coordinate management approaches to OHV use. This process should include a review of enforcing existing rules as an approach to management, as well as the development of new management approaches. The visioning process will not presuppose an increase or decrease in OHV use. Impacts to residents, the environment, and other users will be evaluated when selecting strategies aimed at altering the amount or type of use.
- ii. **Once a vision is established:**
 - a. Standardize communication principles and enforcement practices for OHV regulations, including for parking and staging areas, proper use on designated trails, and conflict minimization best practices among multiple recreation use types and local residents.
 - b. Improve signage and wayfinding to support responsible recreation, including through online maps and resources to inform visitation planning, physical signage to effectively communicate regulations across and between jurisdictions, and other wayfinding resources to ensure OHV users are aware of and complying with expectations for trail uses.
 - c. Evaluate management needs for existing trail and parking amenities for OHV use with respect to impacts to environment and quality of life (for other recreationalists and residents).

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: Use-Specific Trail Considerations

2024 MILESTONES	Define funding source and collaborative group to initiate OHV management planning.
KEY PARTNERS	Federal and municipal land managers and elected officials/decision-makers; OHV use groups; and others with nexus to OHV land use policy implications.
FUTURE PROJECTS	Planning for additional use types (e.g., bikes, e-bikes, hiking); implementation of best use management policies in collaboration with other jurisdictions, aligning designations and policies across boundaries where possible.
FUNDING	State and regional trails grant and funding opportunities; USFS OHV-specific summer crew; revenue from OHV programs; grant opportunities based on OHV vehicle registration fees; trail and parking use fees for hiking, cycling, and mountain biking, among other use types.
SUCCESS DEFINED	Public support for policies that align with best use practices, especially for OHV use.



Chapter 3.

Recreation Management Priority: River Access & Recreation

Clear Creek is becoming an increasingly popular destination for rafting, fishing, and other river-based recreational uses. Clear Creek's proximity to Front Range communities, its significant downward slope, and hydromorphology make it especially attractive to commercial operators who provide rafting experiences to the general public. Rafting on Clear Creek creates economic opportunities for local businesses that are proximal to key staging areas and access points to the Creek. Like other rivers in the southwest, the annual viability of recreation on Clear Creek is vulnerable to drought conditions, impacting both recreation and wildlife habitat. There is a need to improve the permitting process for the benefit of river users, adjacent communities, and commercial rafting operators by prioritizing coordination among permit providers.

Strategy 1: Promote conservation and mitigate environmental impacts to Clear Creek

- i. **Collaborate with local businesses** (e.g., commercial rafting companies, municipal sponsors, etc.) to uphold the conservation and sustainability principles listed in Chapter 1 and support river remediation (e.g., of rebar in-stream) and clean-up.
- ii. **Develop educational guides** on recreation best practices in Clear Creek and other water resources in the County.

Strategy 2: Evaluate rafting and recreation on Clear Creek

- i. **Evaluate types and volume of river uses**, high use stretches, and quality of recreation type by site (e.g., rafting, fishing, etc.), among other factors to address gaps in understanding of recreation use.
- ii. **Identify recreational use monitoring thresholds** (i.e., a certain # of permit days) above which additional management attention is needed.
- iii. **Evaluate other types of water recreation use**, such as personal boating, fishing, swimming, and other water-based recreation in the County. Additional stakeholder discussion and research is needed for non-rafting water recreation in the County.

Strategy 3: Develop an adaptive framework for the management of access points on Clear Creek

- i. Develop a process to holistically evaluate the access and staging areas throughout the Clear Creek corridor for commercial rafting.**
 - a. Anticipate potential short- and long-term disruptions to key access points (e.g., anticipated construction at Floyd Hill).
 - b. Define evaluation principles. These could include river conditions, proximity to other access points, quality of staging, management jurisdiction of proposed staging areas, traffic conditions, and impacts to local communities.
 - c. Finalize the MOU on river access between the County and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- ii. Manage river access to reduce impacts to local communities.**
 - a. Disperse demand from Town Park to reduce current overcrowding concerns.
 - b. Improve traffic flow at access points via shuttles and other transportation infrastructure.
 - c. Monitor daily commercial white water permits at different access points and consider management actions if daily permits exceed a threshold where issues are likely to occur (e.g., traffic backups, impacts to park facilities, etc.). Management actions could include the development of alternate access points along with permit management systems like caps or metering of daily permits at existing access points.

Strategy 4: Coordinate permitting administration among river access providers.

- i. Coordinate permitting alignment and strategies** among land managers and commercial businesses. Mixed ownership of access points creates inconsistency.
 - a. Coordinate between the County and Idaho Springs on permitting alignment.
- ii. Coordinate administrative approaches across jurisdictions** regarding enforcement, fees, and reporting use for commercial operations. Consider charging an increased river permit fee, evaluating the potential tradeoffs and benefits (i.e., improved coordination/management, limit local impacts, potential fund for river access improvements/restoration).



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: River Access & Recreation

2024 MILESTONES	Introduce coordinated updated rafting permit program.
KEY PARTNERS	Permitting agencies, permittees, including commercial rafters, municipal entities with jurisdiction over river access sites.
FUTURE PROJECTS	Finalize MOU with CDOT; manage (add/close) access sites and permits to balance recreation demand and conservation and sustainability principles, establish a watershed stewardship group.
FUNDING	In-kind public-private sponsorships to support land use for staging and access, river remediation and clean-up, and distribution of visitor use guides; public funding to support development of access points and staging areas.
SUCCESS DEFINED	Clear Creek's rafting and river recreation activities balance demand with impacts to local community and environment throughout the river, particularly at river access points.



Chapter 4.

Recreation Management Priority: Destination & Visitor Management

For many years and particularly since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, there have been increases in outdoor recreation-driven tourism challenges. These challenges have been acute for unincorporated Clear Creek residents who live near popular recreation destinations and are impacted by traffic, parking, noise, trash/waste, and visitor conflict. Additionally, increased outdoor recreation tourism presents a challenge to natural resources, especially where sensitive areas are experiencing higher volumes of visitation and/or use does not reflect responsible recreation values, experience, or awareness. Destination and visitor management strategies using visitor education and to foster stewardship may mitigate negative impacts to quality of life, minimize environmental degradation, and improve quality of recreation experience.

Strategy 1: Strengthen destination management including responsible tourism.

- iii. Provide visitors with additional location-specific information to inform trip planning and responsible decision-making.**
 - a. Leverage existing resources and/or pilot the use of new tools to communicate recreation use in real time at high-demand trailheads and recreational facilities. Tools may include promoting COTREX use to raise awareness for authorized trails and their uses and status; cameras at trailheads; mobile applications indicating parking capacity and road conditions at sites, and/or strategically placed variable message boards to direct recreation around the County.
 - b. Coordinate with the Colorado Tourism Office and Clear Creek County Tourism Bureau on destination management in communications with visitors and those who are planning to visit.
- iv. Support and expand “know before you go” communications.**
 - a. Review responsible visitation messaging (i.e., Live WILD). Recreation best practices should include supporting local businesses and respecting local residents in addition to Leave No Trace principles.



- b. Enhance inclusivity of messaging. Consider perceptions of cultural differences between residents and out-of-County recreationalists when promoting outdoor recreation tourism. Focus on projects and initiatives that highlight overlapping values of recreation tourism culture and local Clear Creek County culture. Messaging, education, and outreach should highlight commonalities between perspectives.
- c. Assess where visitors are currently receiving their recreation-related information, distinguishing between different users.
- d. Integrate information on current conditions with responsible recreation messaging.
- e. Coordinate messaging on best practices for parking among land and recreation management agencies within the County.
- f. Highlight the diversity of recreation opportunities throughout the county.
- v. **Standardize wayfinding and signage across jurisdictions** to improve the quality and accessibility of the recreation experience, promote good stewardship behavior, and support enforcement where jurisdictional boundaries are unclear to recreation users.
- vi. **Use adaptive management to respond to tourism demand** and impacts at high-use recreation destinations.
 - a. Through interagency coordination, monitor for, emergent high-use areas and activities that could require adaptive management attention.
 - b. Monitor and adaptively manage high-use recreation destinations. Implement strategies within *Trails Systems* and *River Access and Recreation* with respect to tourism demand and visitation at high-use trailheads and river access points.

Strategy 2: Incorporate transportation solutions into recreation management.

- i. **Leverage existing transportation networks and transit hubs**, such as regional and County-specific transportation resources, as well as development of remote parking alternatives with shuttles to trailheads to alleviate strained parking capacity at high-use destinations.
 - a. Identify gaps in existing transportation infrastructure to serve different recreational uses, for example when considering preferred times of use and equipment.
 - b. Conduct and/or consult and update (as needed) existing location-specific visitor use studies.
 - i. For USFS local approach areas like Mt. Bierstadt/Guanella Pass, see the 2016 Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest Alternative Transportation study and consider opportunities to implement and/or update the study based on recent trends. Consider conducting studies for Grays and Torreys; Mt. Blue Sky (Evans); Herman Gulch; St. Mary's Glacier; and winter access locations such as Jones Gulch, Berthoud Pass, and Loveland Pass to evaluate

transportation management needs and opportunities (see also 1b and management for high use sites).

- ii. Use the April 2023 Research Summary and the August 2023 Community Values report to inform evaluation with visitor use trends and community impacts.

ii. Integrate transit hubs with economic development opportunities and an aim to reduce community and tourist conflict.

- a. Consider the potential impacts to on-trail crowding, i-70 traffic patterns, and area capacity when planning for potential shuttle service options.
- b. Plan transit hubs to provide shuttles to connect municipal areas to trailheads.
- c. Partner with local businesses to connect economic opportunities to transit hubs. Public-private partnerships could also leverage permitting, ticketing, or coupons to access recreation in the County.
- d. Provide ongoing community engagement to ensure conflicts are minimized and local needs are being met, from both economic and community concerns.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY : Destination & Visitor Management	
2024 MILESTONES	Identify key messaging for destination management; initiate transportation pilots for 1-3 visitor use sites; identify partnerships for transit hubs.
KEY PARTNERS	County, State, and federal destination management planners and land use managers, Colorado Tourism Office and County Tourism Bureau, outdoor recreation/tourism business stakeholders, and community members and/or liaisons to implement strategies.
FUTURE PROJECTS	Develop comprehensive wayfinding, signage, and information strategy; evaluate and implement shuttle services to high-use sites; implement transit hubs in all County municipalities.
FUNDING	Lodging and/or sales tax; supplemental and grant funding opportunities; state opportunities (e.g., OREC, CTO, OEDIT); joint County-municipal funding for marketing; partnerships with surrounding counties (see also funding for Priority 4).
SUCCESS DEFINED	Conservation, local quality of life, and outdoor recreation needs are balanced by robust visitor management strategies.





Chapter 5.

Recreation Management Priority: Recreation Economy Planning

The intersection of recreation and economic development is not without tension. At the same time, there is awareness that increased recreation can create economic opportunities. Outdoor recreation planning should diversify and grow Clear Creek County's economic portfolio without compromising the character and culture of life in Clear Creek County. Planning should prioritize opportunities that benefit local residents of the County in long-term, sustainable job creation, positive economic impacts to local businesses, and tax revenue for the County, while minimizing negative impacts to environment and resident quality of life. Moreover, recreation economy planning, which would include recreation-focused economic development, should align with destination management strategies, consider variability in community support for promoting recreation tourism, and the capacity of local businesses to leverage additional recreation traffic for economic benefit.

Strategy 1: Identify models of balanced local and tourist culture that exemplify Clear Creek's goals for recreation economy planning.

- i. Evaluate recreation-based economic development models in the region.**
 - a. Model other communities that have embraced outdoor recreation culture while maintaining alignment with local perspectives, strengthening local cultural characteristics and values, and/or reducing recreation related conflicts.
- ii. Leverage knowledge-sharing opportunities, such as best practice sharing among regional or statewide partnerships.**
- iii. Ensure consistency between recreation-based economic development initiatives and adaptive recreation management needs.**
 - a. Engage land and recreation managers and local officials as part of economic development efforts to understand potential opportunities and impacts of different strategies.
 - b. Publish and make available to the economic development community any established adaptive recreation management frameworks.



Strategy 2: Evaluate and create recreational opportunities for their ability to contribute to ecological and socioeconomic sustainability and cultural, community strength.

- i. Within system wide planning and evaluation, identify and prioritize specific uses and locations that are most likely to boost the local economy, with the least harm.**
 - a. Evaluate economic benefits of additional development using third-party economic analysis for prioritized development opportunities (conduct new Clear Creek County-specific economic analyses as possible).
 - b. Engage local communities and stakeholders and natural resource planners to inform economic development planning with consideration of impact to local residents' quality of life, existing infrastructure, and the conservation of natural resources.
- ii. Explore specific uses and locations, which may include:**
 - a. Expansion and promotion of winter recreation opportunities as an opportunity to drive visitors through downtown Georgetown during the winter, as well as additional opportunities for recreation at Echo Lake.
 - b. Additional front country recreation opportunities, both public and private-led, modeling projects such as the Shelly Quinn Park project, which diversify recreation experiences which connect out-of-County visitors to municipal businesses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: Recreation Economy Planning	
2024 MILESTONES	Evaluate 1-3 potential recreation development projects for near-term implementation.
KEY PARTNERS	County planners, outdoor recreation/tourism business stakeholders, and community members and/or liaisons to implement strategies.
FUTURE PROJECTS	Evaluation and design of winter recreation opportunities; the development of best practices for recreation economic development at key sites in the County.
FUNDING	Grant funding to pilot some of the above initiatives; paid parking at key sites; reservation systems (consider cost equity); tiered passes for amenity access.
SUCCESS DEFINED	Recreation economy planning serves as an accelerator to the CCEDC; recreation economic activity is welcomed in the community and new businesses are thriving.





Chapter 6.

Recreation Management Framework: Adaptive Management

Ongoing management of outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County will be adaptive, collaborative, and based on a set of principles for conservation and sustainability. This approach is based on several key understandings:

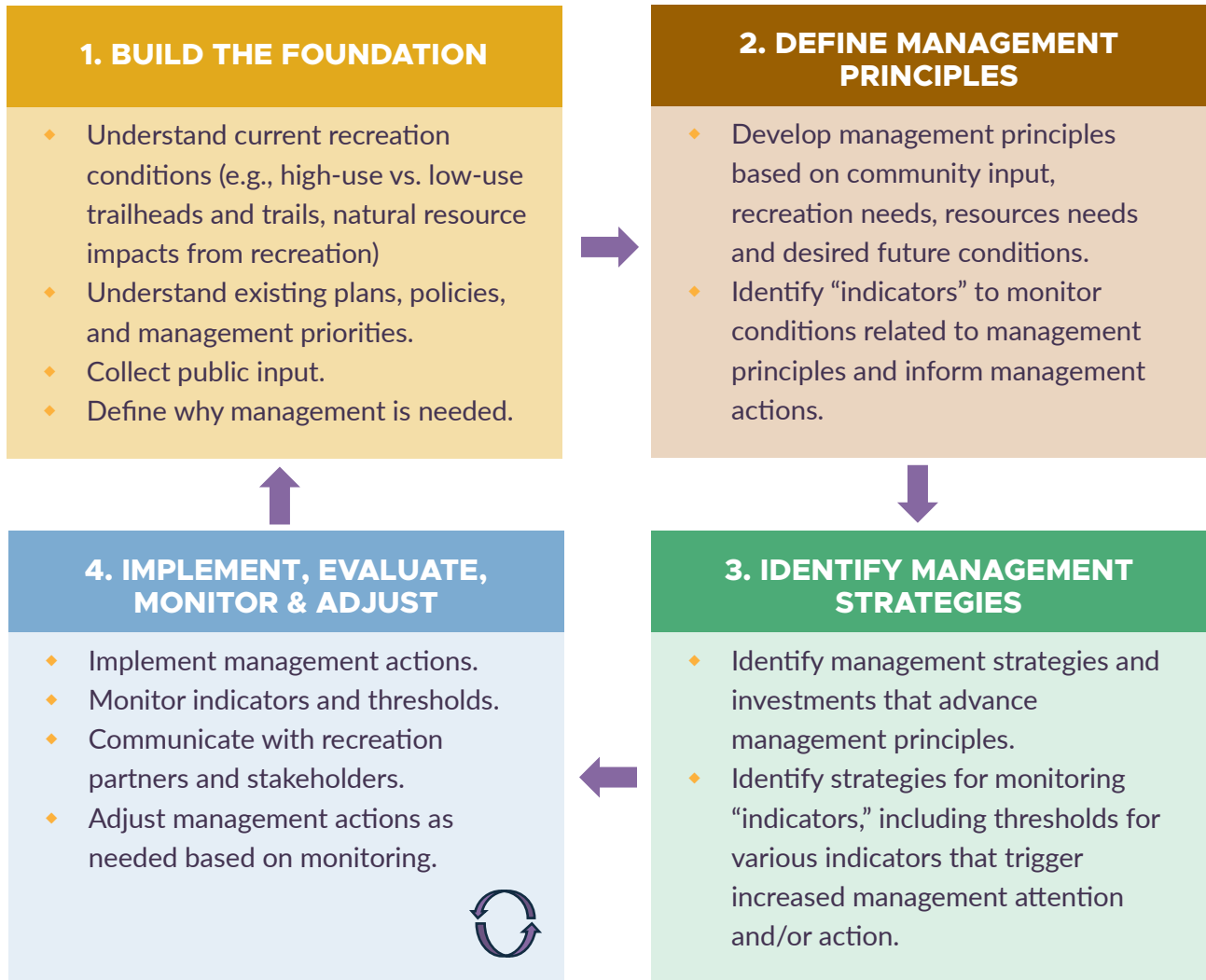
- ◆ It is critical to center and value an **equitable** and **mutualistic** relationship among the local community and its natural and cultural resources.
- ◆ **Collaboration is key** as there is no single, overarching recreation management entity in Clear Creek County.
- ◆ There are **shared opportunities and challenges among land managers**, outdoor recreation organizations, municipalities, and other outdoor recreation stakeholders in the County.
- ◆ There are well-understood recreation management topics that must be addressed. In addition, there will be **future changes** in outdoor recreation trends, climate patterns, and resident and visitor demographics that are more difficult to predict. **This necessitates a management approach that addresses the issues of today and remains adaptable to the issues of tomorrow.**

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

An adaptive approach to recreation management will provide long-term benefit to the County and its collaborators. Management approaches that are responsive to changes in conditions are more likely to be successful in the long-term than those that establish rigid policy based on current conditions. To this end, many land and recreation managers have implemented adaptive management frameworks. Adaptive frameworks provide the flexibility needed to address immediate recreation management needs (i.e., “hot spots”) and be responsive to future changes in on-the-ground conditions. This gives recreation managers a roadmap for future management of recreation in adherence to currently established goals and principles.

The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council, a collection of six federal land management agencies, has developed a model framework that can be adapted to different contexts for both near-term and long-term recreation and land management. This framework consists of four primary components, each of which inform one another and can be revisited and modified on an ongoing basis.

FOUR STEPS FOR ADAPTIVE RECREATION MANAGEMENT



Through the development of the ROMP, Clear Creek County has already taken steps towards the establishment of an adaptive management framework. The ROMP contains much of the information needed for Steps 1, 2, and 3 identified above. Additional work that will be needed to fully prepare the adaptive management approach include:

- ◆ Identifying indicators of outdoor recreation conditions in the County, as well as associated thresholds and monitoring strategies (see below).
- ◆ Further identification and refinement of specific management strategies and actions that can be taken in response to changing conditions and in association with the recreation priorities identified in the ROMP.
- ◆ Creation of systems for collaboration and decision making to adaptively coordinate and fully own and advance the ROMP.

The findings, principles, priorities, and initial strategies presented in the ROMP can be used to directly inform these next steps towards the development of an adaptive management framework. While the adaptive management framework provides flexibility, the principles and priorities articulated in the ROMP also provide clarity on the values, philosophies and sideboards that will help Clear Creek navigate future issues.

Future Step: Identifying and Monitoring Indicators of On-The-Ground Conditions

Below are examples of existing data that can be used to monitor outdoor recreation in Clear Creek County for coordination among land managers and periodic sharing with the public. As each recreation management priority identified in the ROMP undergoes additional planning, refinement, and implementation, monitoring indicators and corresponding data can also be refined:

- ◆ Trail use volumes by trail location and type
- ◆ Annual 14er visitation; Mount Blue Sky (Evans) reservation data
- ◆ Mileage of trail by type and difficulty (including ADA accessible)
- ◆ Mileage of social/unauthorized trail (some areas)
- ◆ Acreage of conserved land
- ◆ Existing resource monitoring from land management agencies
- ◆ Clear Creek rafting permit user days
- ◆ Traffic monitoring – traffic volumes, speed monitoring/citations, and CDOT I-70 traffic data
- ◆ Ski area visits
- ◆ Sales tax revenue & visitor spending
- ◆ Other indicators as identified through additional planning regarding ROMP priorities.

Additional approaches that could be employed for monitoring outdoor recreation could include:

- ◆ Standard recreation user survey administered periodically (e.g., every 5 years)
- ◆ Parking and illegal parking counts and other traffic studies
- ◆ Detailed visitor use studies and natural resource assessments to better define current/desired future conditions.
- ◆ Presence of trash and pet waste

The following criteria can be used to inform the development of a monitoring program for outdoor recreation in the County:

- ◆ What data and information are recreation partners already collecting and tracking?
- ◆ Readily available data versus new data creation
- ◆ Agency capacity for data collection, analysis, and reporting
- ◆ What are the thresholds that trigger increased management attention (e.g., 20% increase in use of trails that access fragile alpine habitat)?
- ◆ How do identified thresholds relate to management principles?

Identifying and monitoring these thresholds will enable managers to implement strategies in an iterative, adaptive process responsive to conditions and changes on the ground.

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Throughout the ROMP development process, community members and leaders consistently expressed the importance of an approach to recreation management that respects, centers the needs of, and creates an equitable partnership between Clear Creek County's recreation opportunities and its residents. While community members may differ in their specific priorities regarding increasing conservation, managing existing uses and impacts, and/or providing new recreation opportunities, a consistent theme of feedback is that any recreation management activity should be consistent with local community values and with social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This mutualist culture valuing Clear Creek's residents and its natural and cultural resources underpins the ROMP, including through its emphasis on leading with principles for conservation and sustainability.

COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT & THE ROLE OF THE ROMP

While Clear Creek County has no single overarching outdoor recreation management body or entity, there are a variety of land managers, government agencies, and community partners that support and manage recreation offerings in the County. Each land management entity holds its own decision



authority over the lands it manages. There is a history of partnerships (both formal and ad hoc) between these entities. Given the small population and limited resources within the County and the significant demand for outdoor recreation, the development of a collaborative management framework for the County is critical. Clear Creek County convened the ROMP process to help build alignment and coordination across the various land managers toward shared goals and priorities.

There is also a history in Clear Creek County of residents coming together to address shared challenges and opportunities. Building from the engagement efforts of the ROMP, it will be critical to continue collaboration with community members to inform refinement and implementation of recreation management priorities consistent with community values.



Chapter 7.

Next Steps: Future Projects

The ROMP provides a critical first step and roadmap toward the identification, design, implementation and monitoring of projects and initiatives intended to achieve the ROMP's vision and goals. The planning and alignment it has created provides a foundation for meaningful collaboration and future work for a greater community of land managers and stakeholders. The management priorities and strategies developed by the ROMP teams provide the basis for launching actionable projects. Given the multitude of potential projects, prioritization of the most critical next steps focuses on:

- ◆ Projects that lead to improvements and/or limit negative impacts as defined by the conservation and sustainability principles.
- ◆ Projects that are foundational to a number of the priorities and strategies,
- ◆ Projects that address the most urgent issues for recreation management and its impacts in the county
- ◆ Projects that address cross-jurisdictional coordination needs
- ◆ Projects that leverage partnerships between the public and private sector
- ◆ Projects that are not otherwise already being led by other jurisdictions and/or collaborative efforts (*for example, several ROMP strategies such as those related to 14ers and destination and visitor management, as well as other efforts such as the Peaks to Plains Trail*)
- ◆ Projects that make efficient use of existing resources and amenities, including prioritizing the completion of current projects.
- ◆ Projects that serve currently unmet needs and audiences, including opportunities that are accessible financially as well as physically
- ◆ Projects that have broad public support
- ◆ Projects that contribute to the local economy, for example by being close to town business centers

High priority projects and next steps for implementation include:

- ◆ **Coordinated Recreation Management Capacity.** Formalize an interagency team to support ongoing collaboration and coordination amongst recreation and land managers. This team can both inform and implement ROMP strategies within an adaptive management framework.



- ◆ **Management strategies for “approach” areas.** Capitalize on positive USFS relations to develop innovations in management of “approach” areas: high-use, high-conflict zones that border USFS land, where solution implementation is more possible and impactful.
- ◆ **Systems-scale mapping solutions.** Use data to build maps that allow staff to coordinate across jurisdictions and to better manage the trails network as a whole:
 - ◆ Identify systems-scale status and management needs for trails and associated amenities.
 - ◆ Identify management solutions and cross- jurisdictional coordination needs.
 - ◆ Identify potential new recreational opportunities for their ability to contribute to ecological and socioeconomic sustainability and cultural, community strength.
- ◆ **Creek Corridor Management.** Identify priority geographic needs and tools for river recreation management, particularly managing access for commercial and non-commercial rafting.
- ◆ **OHV Planning.** Develop OHV goals and management plans with strategies across jurisdictions in the county.
- ◆ **Visitor Management.** Use transportation and wayfinding as destination management approaches for mitigating negative impacts to high use and/or residential areas and for improving responsible visitor behavior.
- ◆ **Winter Recreation.** Further explore, with municipality input, the current interest level in expanding winter recreation uses
- ◆ **Eastern Clear Creek.** Evaluate the potential for the development of recreational opportunities on the Eastern side of the county.

The ROMP will inform subsequent strategic and project-specific planning and implementation, which will be led by the County and the Interagency Team, with input from stakeholders and the broader community, as part of the ongoing management plan described below. Work will begin with these priorities, but Clear Creek County will likely be engaged in future projects related to recreation management for the foreseeable future. Land is finite; protecting the land from negative recreation use impacts is an eternal task.



Chapter 8.

Next Steps: Ongoing Management

THE ROLE OF CLEAR CREEK COUNTY

The County has been a leader in providing resources for recreation and public lands for decades, most notably through the voter-created Open Space Fund approved in 1999. The ROMP is another of many steps the County has taken to invest in recreation management capacity through staff and a robust community team, the Open Space Commission.

As the convening entity for the ROMP development effort, Clear Creek County convened several interagency, stakeholder and community discussions. Going forward, the intent is for Clear Creek County to continue that leadership and coordination to implement the priorities of the ROMP as the community moves from Phase 1 – Aligning Vision, Establishing Priorities, Creating Capacity to Phase 2, which will provide continued planning, funding analysis and project identification. As a county with limited financial and staff capacity, and as only one of the many entities with public land management jurisdiction within County boundaries, partnership and coordination with other agencies will continue to be critical. Similarly, engagement and partnership with a wide variety of community members, recreation groups, businesses, non-profits, and more are an essential foundation for success.

INTERAGENCY RECREATION GROUP

An Interagency Team was established to assist in the development of Phase 1 of the ROMP and included federal, state, county, municipal, and special district partners that manage public land within the boundaries of Clear Creek County. The charge of the team was to help to identify and provide data and information, provide input on agendas and approaches for stakeholder and community engagement, and help to identify potential management priorities. The Interagency Team served in an advisory capacity, offering non-binding input into the development of the ROMP.

The Interagency Team also considered what ongoing coordination would be needed for recreation planning and management in the implementation of the ROMP. The team agreed that an ongoing interagency group would be beneficial for coordination above and beyond project-specific needs, which would ideally include ongoing recreation management. Such a group would have a similar membership as the one established for the ROMP. A charter organizing the group would be



intentional in anticipating and addressing areas where agency missions overlap. In the implementation of the ROMP, the group would meet regularly to provide direction on strategies with cross-jurisdictional implications, including the priorities identified in the ROMP, with joint public engagement as needed. The working relationships developed in this group and the common vision expressed by the ROMP may end up generating alignment between future land management plans specific to each jurisdiction.

The Interagency Team included the following members, and the ongoing interagency group would include but not be limited to those on this list.

- ◆ U.S. Forest Service, Clear Creek Ranger District
- ◆ Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- ◆ Clear Creek County
- ◆ City of Idaho Springs
- ◆ City and County of Denver, Denver Mountain Parks
- ◆ Town of Silver Plume
- ◆ Town of Georgetown
- ◆ Town of Empire
- ◆ Clear Creek County Metro Recreation District (CCMRD)
- ◆ Historic District Public Lands Commission (HDPLC) for the Georgetown - Silver Plume National Historic Landmark District

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To address ongoing needs for stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the ROMP, the Interagency Team recommended establishing an ongoing stakeholder committee for recreation management. This committee would be similar to the Planning Partners Team that was established during the ROMP development effort, with a membership that would include community members representative of diverse recreation uses in Clear Creek, as well as the tourism board, and environmental and open space interests such as SOLVE, the Open Space Commission, and Friends of Clear Creek; where possible, existing fora for engagement of stakeholder feedback would be leveraged to avoid redundancy of efforts. The purpose of this stakeholder committee would be to facilitate ongoing input and communication amongst recreation organizations and users in the County.

The stakeholder committee, convened by Clear Creek County, would primarily be responsive to priority- and/or project-specific issues related to the ROMP as they arise and would also meet periodically (e.g., annually) to discuss recreation management issues more broadly and over a longer term. Its members would be charged with disseminating news and questions to their membership for broader knowledge and input. Project-specific dialogue may also engage a subset of stakeholders

and community members interested in a particular topic, including those who would be impacted by modifications to recreational use and development.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

The County intends to continue to engage the broader Clear Creek community as further project planning for Recreation Management occurs. Such community involvement would be managed on the Clear Creek Forum, and community members would be alerted to these opportunities by their connection to members of the stakeholder committee who represent diverse community interests. Broader advertisement of forum opportunities would be advertised through QR codes posted at recreational focal points throughout the county.



WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

The ROMP Phase 1 has provided the community of Clear Creek County with an aligned vision for recreation and several clear Recreation Management priorities. The project created teams and connections that can continue beyond the completion of Phase 1 and allow the community to take on the remaining work of community informed recreation management.

With the ROMP Phase 1, Clear Creek County has what is needed to make progress, apply for more funds, and begin to manage the recreational visitation in a way that strengthens community. In Phase 2 more detailed plans can be made with a foundation of alignment. Strategies and rules can be adopted from a framework of agreed upon priorities. Challenges and opportunities can be met by teams and entities that are connected via a shared plan.

From here, Clear Creek County can begin planning for work on each of the Recreation Management Priorities and determining the approach for doing so that fulfills the vision of the ROMP; an approach that enriches local communities and welcomes a diverse range of visitors in a way that protects and improves the integrity of the area's natural and cultural resources for the long term.

