



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Regional Snapshots



Field Trip: Boulder County



Workshop: outdoor accessibility for all

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01 FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear NoCo Places Partners, Supporters, and Friends,

As 2025 draws to a close, I am honored to share a year of meaningful collaboration, growth, and progress for NoCo Places. It has been a time of important transitions and exciting milestones for our coalition, and I'm grateful for the commitment each of you brings to conserving and stewarding the public lands of our region. This year, NoCo Places continued to advance its core mission: to protect and conserve natural and cultural resources while facilitating equitable access and quality outdoor recreation experiences across Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Larimer counties. Our work is guided by the collaborative spirit of nine county, state, and federal land management agencies who have come together as a unified voice for public lands in the region.

A major focus in 2024–2025 was the implementation of the NoCo Places Conservation and Recreation Vision, finalized in September 2024. This regionally developed vision articulates shared values, strategies, and desired future conditions that guides collective action on landscape-scale conservation and recreation challenges. The vision represents years of partnership, technical analysis, and community engagement, and continues to shape priority work as we move forward. This year also marked a leadership transition for NoCo Places. Our founder and inaugural Executive Director, Steve Coffin, retired in July. I am humbled to have stepped into the role of Executive Director and to continue building on Steve's leadership and the strong foundations our partners helped establish. I am grateful for Steve's stewardship and for the trust and encouragement I've received from partners across the region.

Looking ahead, we are especially proud to report that NoCo Places successfully secured a \$560,000 grant through the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative, funded by **Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)** and **Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)**. This significant investment will support staff capacity and a year-long program to begin assessing the 345 plus miles of user-created, unauthorized trails across the NoCo region. Working with agency members and partners, we'll be evaluating whether these trails should be restored, closed, monitored, or incorporated into the formal trail network. This work will help reduce habitat fragmentation, protect wildlife corridors, enhance recreation experiences, and foster a culture of responsible outdoor use.

In addition to this major funding award, we continued to advance shared regional priorities, including supporting common stewardship and safety messaging, strengthening data-informed decision-making, and facilitating regular collaboration among agency partners. Our communications efforts, including shared stewardship content and digital visitor tools, expanded public awareness of responsible land use and provided valuable resources for visitors navigating varied landscapes and conditions.

None of these accomplishments would be possible without our agency members, NoCo staff, our partners, and many collaborators whose expertise and dedication drive collective accomplishments. We are continually humbled by the knowledge, commitment, and passion that define this partnership and look forward to an even stronger, more coordinated approach to conservation and recreation management in the years ahead.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement, support, and shared vision for the future of public lands in Northern Colorado. Together, we are advancing landscape-scale stewardship for the benefit of residents, visitors, wildlife, and generations to come.



With gratitude and anticipation,

JD Tanner | EdD, CPRE
Executive Director
NoCo Places

02 OUR STORY

A common voice for public lands

CHALLENGES IN THE NOCO REGION

Those who live and play in the Northern Front Range of Colorado know it is a beautiful and special place. It's wonderful that so many people want to be outdoors in Colorado. We have stunning landscapes, biodiversity, unique recreation opportunities, and special places with cultural and community value. All of this is worth protecting, as is the ability of everyone to enjoy these assets.

People's needs, wants, and desires are much different now than they were in the 1960s and 1970s, the last time recreation planning was undertaken in some areas of the Northern Front Range. Climate change is also changing the environment of the Front Range. It is at more risk of extreme fire, flooding, and drought, and our ecosystems are stressed as a result. We need to protect our ecosystems because healthy ecosystems protect against threats from extreme climate events. A big part of protecting our ecosystems is how we experience and use the land, which recreation plans can help address. Lastly, wildlife interactions with people are becoming more common.

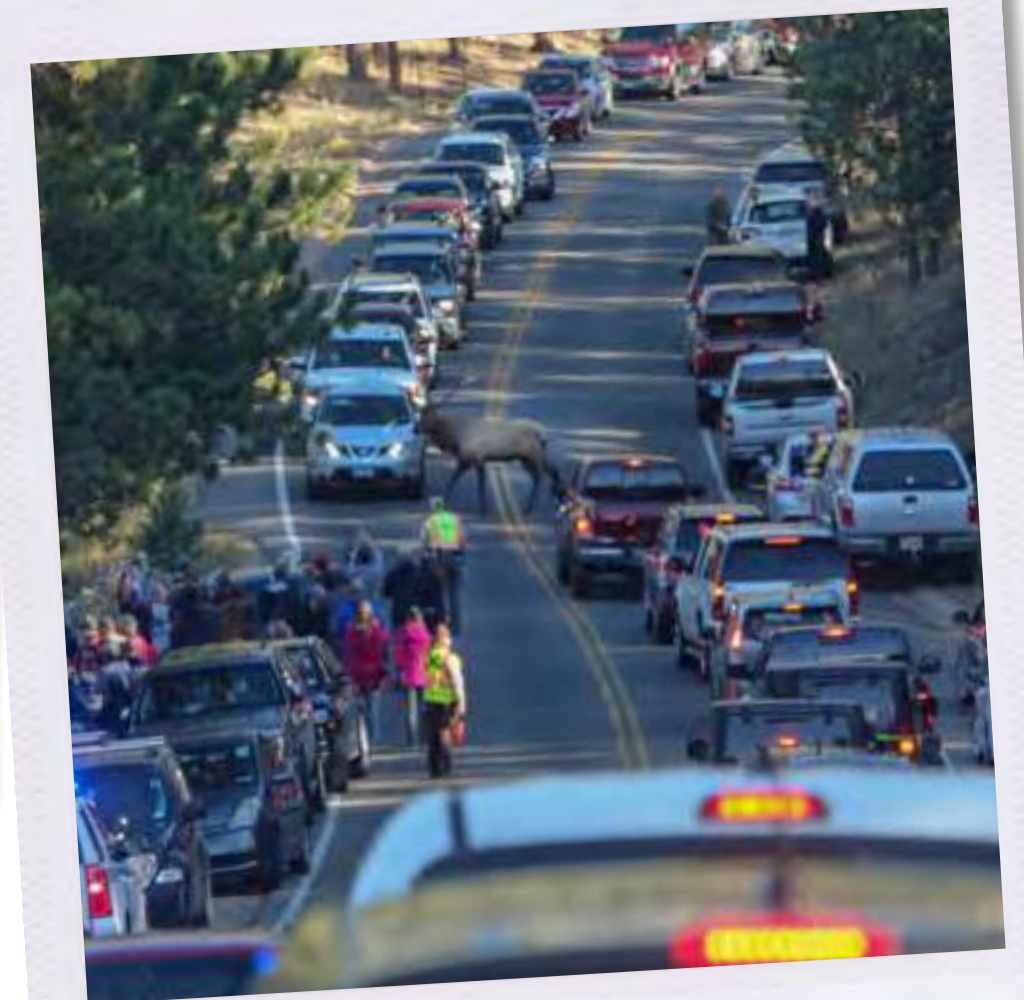
Addressing all of these challenges requires a multi-jurisdictional, landscape approach. This is the approach taken by NoCo Places.

"Through collaboration we are stronger. We can leverage our resources and work together. We can be more powerful, and more successful in keeping these great places while making it a great experience for everybody."

~ Shannon Schaller
Deputy Regional Manager, Northeast Region,
Colorado Parks & Wildlife



*Long Lake Trailhead
Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests*



*Rocky Mountain National Park
Photo by Ann Schonlau*

WHO WE ARE



MISSION

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.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

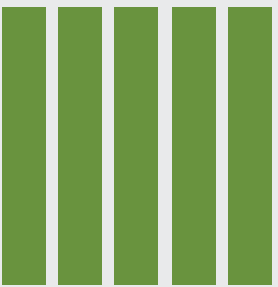
The NoCo Places Executive Committee is our decision-making body. It consists of one representative from each of NoCo's nine agencies. It meets monthly and is co-chaired by a representative of the participating counties and one from either the federal agencies or the state. Decision-making is by consensus. Each agency retains its autonomy and commits to developing agency-specific plans that are informed and guided by NoCo principles and developed in collaboration with the other NoCo agencies. In addition to agency-specific plans, NoCo identifies actions it can take collectively with the participation of most or all of the NoCo agencies.

REPRESENTATIVES

- Heidi Wagner, Interim Director, Boulder County Parks & Open Space
- Jodie Hartman-Ball, Clear Creek County Commissioner
- Shannon Dennison, Director, Denver Mountain Parks
- Sandy Hollingsworth, Gilpin County Commissioner
- Daylan Figgs, Director, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources
- Aaron Roth, Director, Jefferson County Parks & Conservation
- Shannon Schaller, Deputy Regional Manager, Northeast Region, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Gary Ingram, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park
- Jason Sieg, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland

PARTNERS, STAFF, & FUNDING

NOCO PARTNERS



The decisions of the NoCo Executive Committee are guided and informed by the NoCo Partners, a group of approximately 75 individuals that includes staff from each of the agencies and individuals with expertise in subjects that are important to the management of these public lands. Their expertise is diverse and wide-ranging and includes outdoor motorized and non-motorized recreation, the environment, historic and cultural resources, transportation, the outdoor recreation industry, and other issues that directly impact the landscapes of the Northern Front Range.

FUNDING



Funding for NoCo Places comes from a combination of contributions from participating agencies and grants. Special thanks to the following grant funders in 2025:

- *Directors Innovation Fund* grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife for stakeholder engagement in the Lefthand Canyon OHV area
- *The Mighty Arrow Foundation* grant for communications efforts
- *Great Outdoors Colorado* and *Colorado Parks and Wildlife* Regional Partnership Initiative grant for capacity and unauthorized trails project



STANDING COMMITTEES



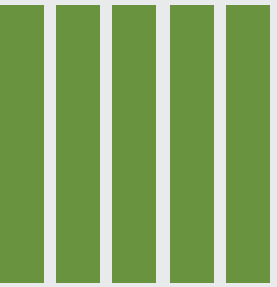
Communications Subcommittee

Consists of communications staff from each of NoCo's nine agencies who meet regularly to coordinate communications and identify common messaging campaigns.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Work Group

A state and county-led effort, consisting of agency staff who meet regularly to share knowledge, best practices, and identify actions that can be used by participating agencies to ensure their public lands are welcoming and respectful of all.

STAFF



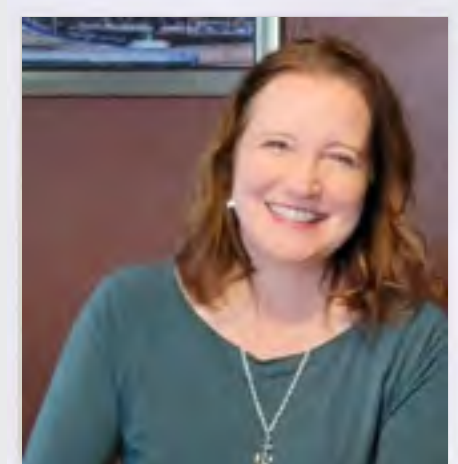
JD Tanner
Executive Director



John Hannon
Programs Manager



Katie Matthews
Communications Manager



STATEWIDE ENGAGEMENT & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Conference Participation

NoCo Places strengthened its presence and visibility across Colorado by participating in four statewide conferences in 2025.

APRIL

NoCo staff members and a member of the Executive Committee presented at the **Partners in the Outdoors** conference, hosted by Colorado Parks & Wildlife, in Colorado Springs. The session, entitled, “Mapping Unauthorized Trails Region-wide: The Results of a Three-Hundred-Plus-Mile Endeavor” covered the methodology and results of the research, as well as examples of effective messaging for the use of designated trails.



OCTOBER

NoCo Places was invited to participate as a panel member at the **Wildlife Action Summit** hosted by the Colorado Wildlife Federation and National Wildlife Federation, held the Denver Botanical Gardens. The panel was comprised of several members of CPW’s Regional Partnership Initiative. NoCo was specifically asked to report on our unauthorized trails work and the future potential positive impacts to wildlife.



Staff attended the **Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA)** conference in Steamboat Springs, where we connected with land managers, nonprofit partners, and recreation leaders from across the state, building relationships and sharing insights on regional collaboration and stewardship challenges within our open space systems.

NoCo Places was invited to present at the **Colorado Outdoor Industry Leadership Summit (COILS)** in Estes Park. Executive Director JD Tanner presented alongside Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Great Outdoors Colorado staff in a workshop focused on the Regional Partners model—a new approach to cross-jurisdictional conservation and recreation management. The session highlighted how Regional Partners function in practice and showcased NoCo Places’ active projects, including regional coordination, stewardship initiatives, and efforts to address unauthorized trails and visitor impacts. Together, these engagements helped elevate NoCo Places’ role as a leading example of regional collaboration in Colorado’s outdoor and conservation community.



03 COLLABORATIVE TRAININGS

Working together to make public lands accessible for everyone

STAFF TRAININGS

NoCo Places hosted a series of training workshops designed for the staff of participating NoCo agencies to learn and share ideas around meaningful engagement in making the outdoors accessible for all.

The three workshops, facilitated by Keystone Policy Center, were held in Larimer, Boulder, and Jefferson Counties. Each session ended with breakout groups discussing action planning for NoCo Places.

1. Tribal and Indigenous Engagement

Held in Fort Collins at the Larimer County admin building, the workshop began with presentations from the Center for Tribal and Indigenous Engagement at **Keystone Policy Center**, and **Mending Mountains Collective LLC**.

This workshop was comprised of a brief history of tribal nations and indigenous communities in Northern Colorado; a deep dive on Colorado's guidance framework for tribal collaboration.

2. Outdoor Accessibility for All

This training took place at Pella Crossing Park in Longmont to provide for a hands-on trail experience. The presentations covered an orientation to accessible recreation including an overview of best terminology and etiquette; working through scenarios in small groups; and roundtable sharing of ongoing accessibility work in the region. Participants heard from representatives of **Omni Accessible**, **Every Body Outside Consulting**, **The Traveling Gnomes**, **Camp Always Choose Adventures**, and **Blindfulness**.

The group took advantage of the outdoor location to engage in experiential learning. Each facilitator led small groups on the trail and enabled participants to use a wheelchair on a crusher fine trail, use vision impairment simulation glasses and a cane, or walk with an oxygen backpack.

3. Inclusive Partnerships

This workshop focused on establishing a shared understanding of key terms; recognizing the historical barriers and challenges that shape current inequities in access to public lands; strengthening cultural competency for effective engagement with underrepresented communities; developing thoughtful, reciprocal partnerships; and supporting staff doing this work and raising all boats across agencies at different stages in their journey.

Parker McMullen Bushman, CEO of **Ecoinclusive Strategies** and founder of the **Summit for Action**, facilitated this workshop.



Christine Zenel, Keystone Policy Center, facilitates the group's collective ideas for recommended actions



Participants try out wheelchairs on a crusher fine trail surface while others use vision impairment simulation glasses and a cane to navigate the trail.



Parker McMullen Bushman

04 PARTNERSHIPS & STAKEHOLDERS

Collaborative approaches to regional challenges

UNAUTHORIZED TRAILS

NoCo Places' unauthorized trails mapping project spans across four of the NoCo jurisdictions: Gilpin, Clear Creek, and Boulder counties, and the Arapaho/Roosevelt National Forests. Trails were mapped and visitor use "hot spot" areas were identified by the jurisdictions. In total, 345.88 miles of unauthorized trails were identified.

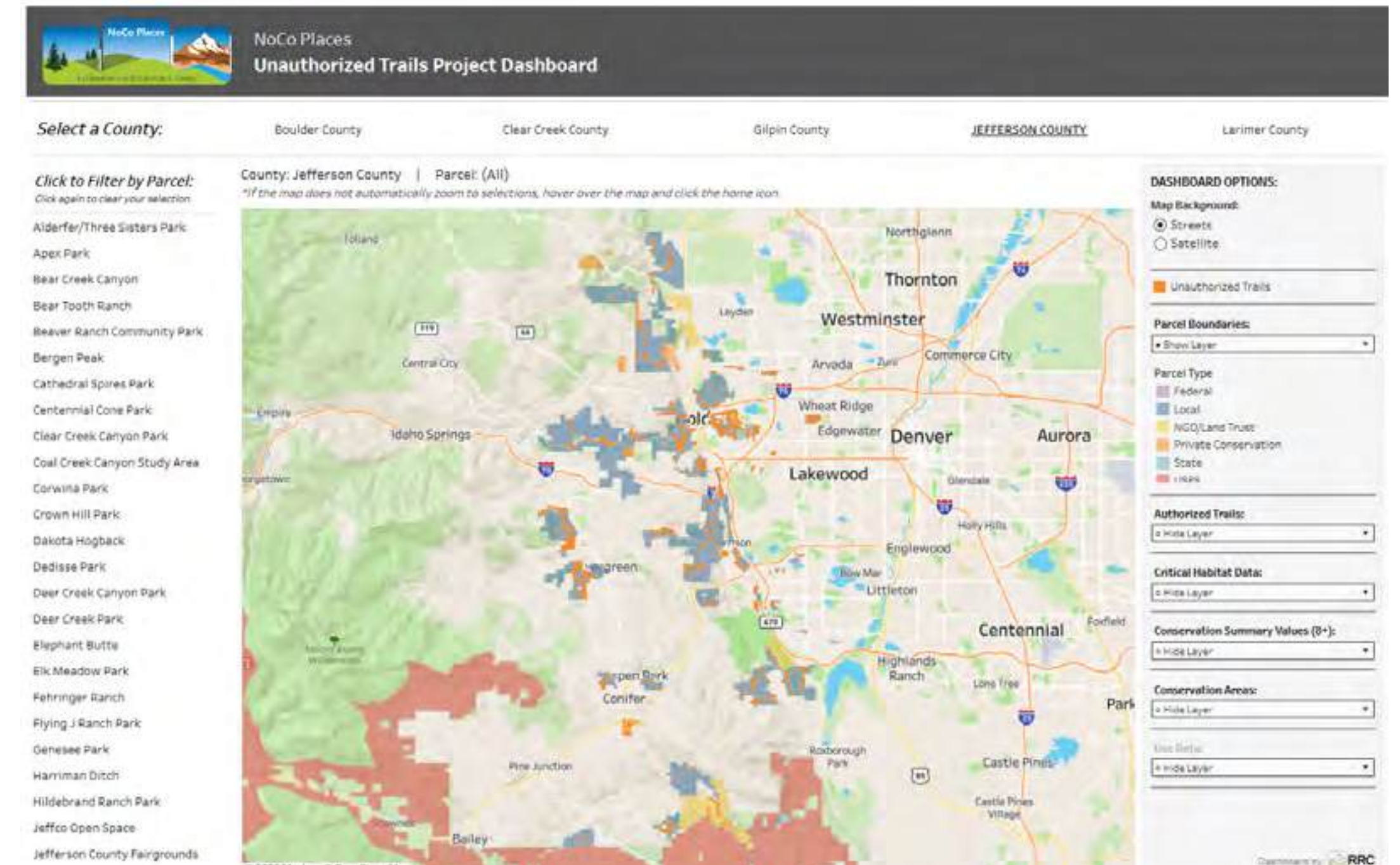
At the end of 2025, **RRC Associates** completed the data dashboard, developing a fully interactive GIS data dashboard for unauthorized trails within the NoCo region. The rich dashboard includes layers that will help NoCo staff and agencies develop regional priorities to address unauthorized trails within NoCo. Along with location data, the dashboard incorporates various resource and visitation based data from various sources such as NoCo's biodiversity map and mobile phone data (Conservation Summary Value data that the Colorado Natural Heritage Program previously created for NoCo as part of the Conservation and Recreation Vision), and CPW's wildlife mapping.

These sources will aid in selecting which unauthorized trails may be causing the greatest impact on the landscape. This data, along with agency needs and stakeholder input, will guide NoCo in addressing these trails through restoration or adoption into the formal trail system.

In addition, other jurisdictions and their unauthorized trails were added into the dashboard to give a complete picture of there region.

Next, NoCo Places will be developing criteria for the prioritization of actions for each trail. NoCo staff will work with each agency on the trails in their jurisdiction, and NoCo stakeholders will be involved in conversations about the future of these trails.

With the recent award of a CPW RPI implementation grant NoCo is planning to partner with the Larimer County Conservation Corps to provide some on-the-ground effort to address these unauthorized trails in 2026.



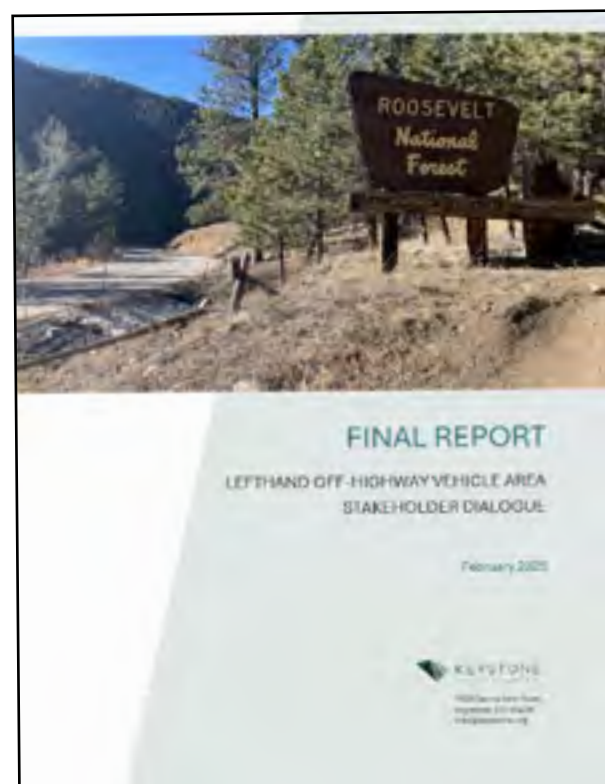
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In the fall of 2024, the USDA Forest Service's Boulder Ranger District hosted a series of stakeholder meetings regarding the Lefthand Canyon area near Boulder. Specifically, the meetings addressed how best to reopen the area to motorized recreation post-2013 flooding.

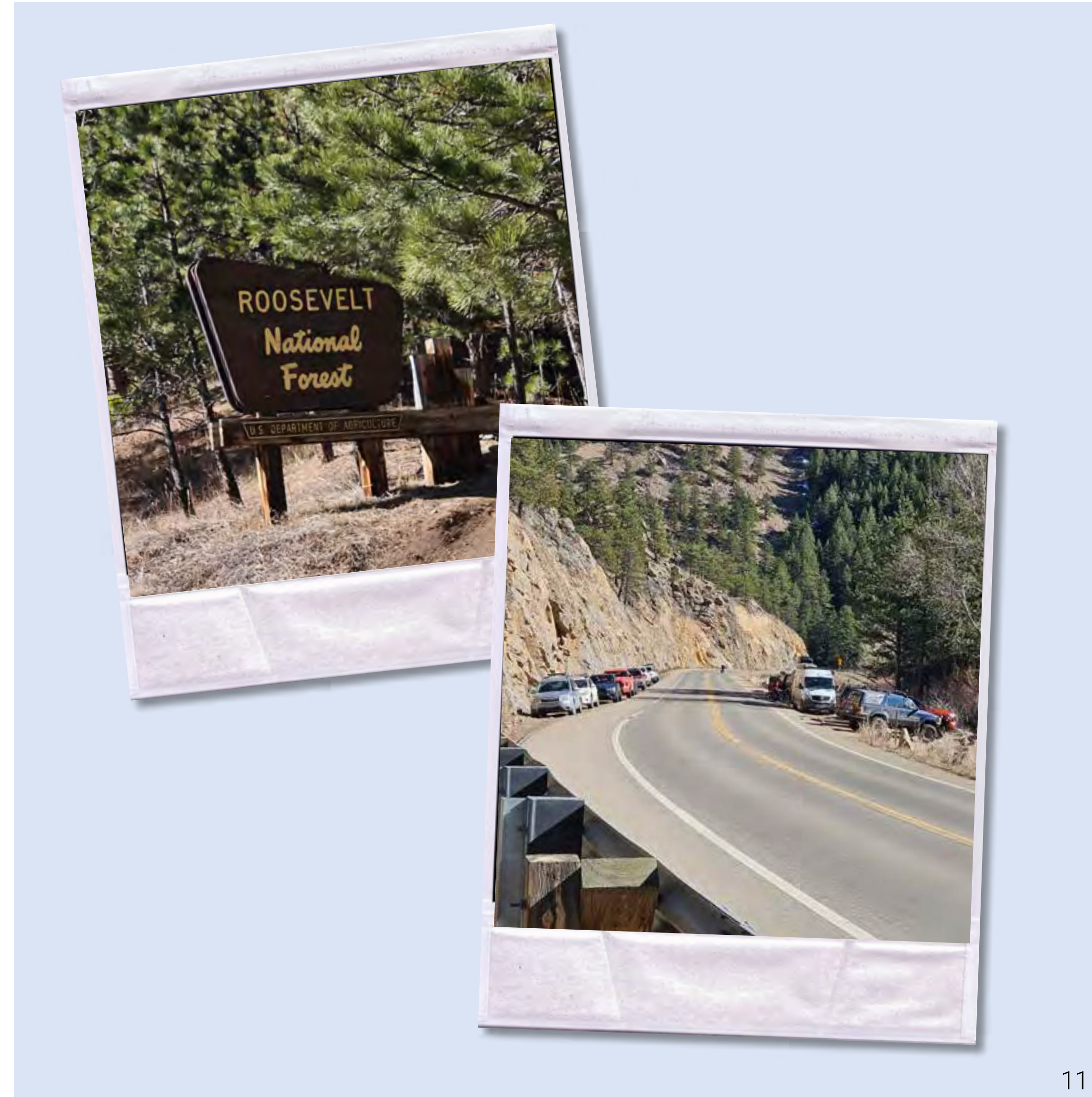
A Colorado Parks and Wildlife grant supported this series of meetings, and Keystone Policy Center was hired to facilitate. In 2025, NoCo Places participated in the meetings, bringing a regional perspective on recreation and conservation to the process. The stakeholder group made significant progress in supporting the Forest Service's planning process.

However, the grant funding supporting the Keystone contract and the stakeholder effort has come to an end. To maintain the momentum of the stakeholder group and support their solution-finding efforts, NoCo Places is providing facilitation support. Our involvement is designed to maintain engagement, continuity, and productive dialogue, enabling the group to continue its work in partnership with the Forest Service and regional partners to address motorized recreation and broader conservation concerns.

For additional context and background, Keystone Policy Center developed a report on the first series of Lefthand Canyon area stakeholder dialogues.



[View Stakeholder Meeting Report](#)



PARTNER FIELD TRIPS

Examining Regional Biodiversity

The Conservation Summary map created by NoCo Places as part of the [Conservation and Recreation Vision](#) shows the region's relative presence of biodiversity assets. This map prompted the idea for field trips to areas in the region for NoCo agencies and partners to learn about management challenges and successes at different locations.

April marked the first field trip by NoCo staff, Executive Committee members, and Partners. The [Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain](#), managed by Boulder County Parks and Open Space, and the neighboring Red-Tail Ridge in Larimer County (not open to the public yet) represent one of the areas of highest biodiversity in the NoCo region. This area represents successful joint planning efforts across jurisdictional boundaries to preserve the area's biodiversity while planning for future recreational opportunities within both areas.

Rabbit Mountain is one of the most ecologically diverse open space properties in Boulder County at the transition between the plains and mountains, consisting of native grasslands, shrublands, and woodlands. Around 5,500 acres have been purchased by Boulder County as open space since 1983, with several conservation easements on properties surrounding Rabbit Mountain. The 6.2 miles of multi-use trails saw 68,963 visitors in 2023.

The site is a great example of the NoCo coalition in action, fostering relationships for joint efforts of Boulder and Larimer Counties and allowing staff to work in partnership to preserve such a rich area spanning the county lines. Staff from both counties were on hand to share details of the area's rich biodiversity and answer questions for the attendees.

More field trips are slated for 2026.

Biodiversity at Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain



05 CONNECTED COMMUNICATIONS

Shared stewardship and safety messaging

COMMUNICATIONS & MESSAGING

In September, NoCo launched a common messaging campaign in collaboration with **Colorado Search and Rescue** and a local outdoor influencer/ambassador. The NoCo Communications Subcommittee identified high rates of backcountry rescues as an important area to address. There was a desire to share Know Before You Go messaging about recreating in the front and backcountry and to partner with the subject-matter expert, Colorado Search and Rescue. Additionally, the Communications Subcommittee sought to work with a local social media ambassador focused on Colorado public lands to increase the reach of the messaging and engage a younger demographic.



Colorado outdoor ambassador Kara Niessen
@Kara_Wandering



The audience for this campaign included visitors to the Colorado Front Range, people trying a new sport in the front or backcountry, and a younger demographic aged 20-35.

The result was an informative and engaging video in which NoCo agencies and Colorado Search and Rescue collaborated to develop Know Before You Go messaging they could all get behind.

[Watch the Video](#)

100%
of common messaging
campaigns were
translated to Spanish

4,500+
views of Search
& Rescue video

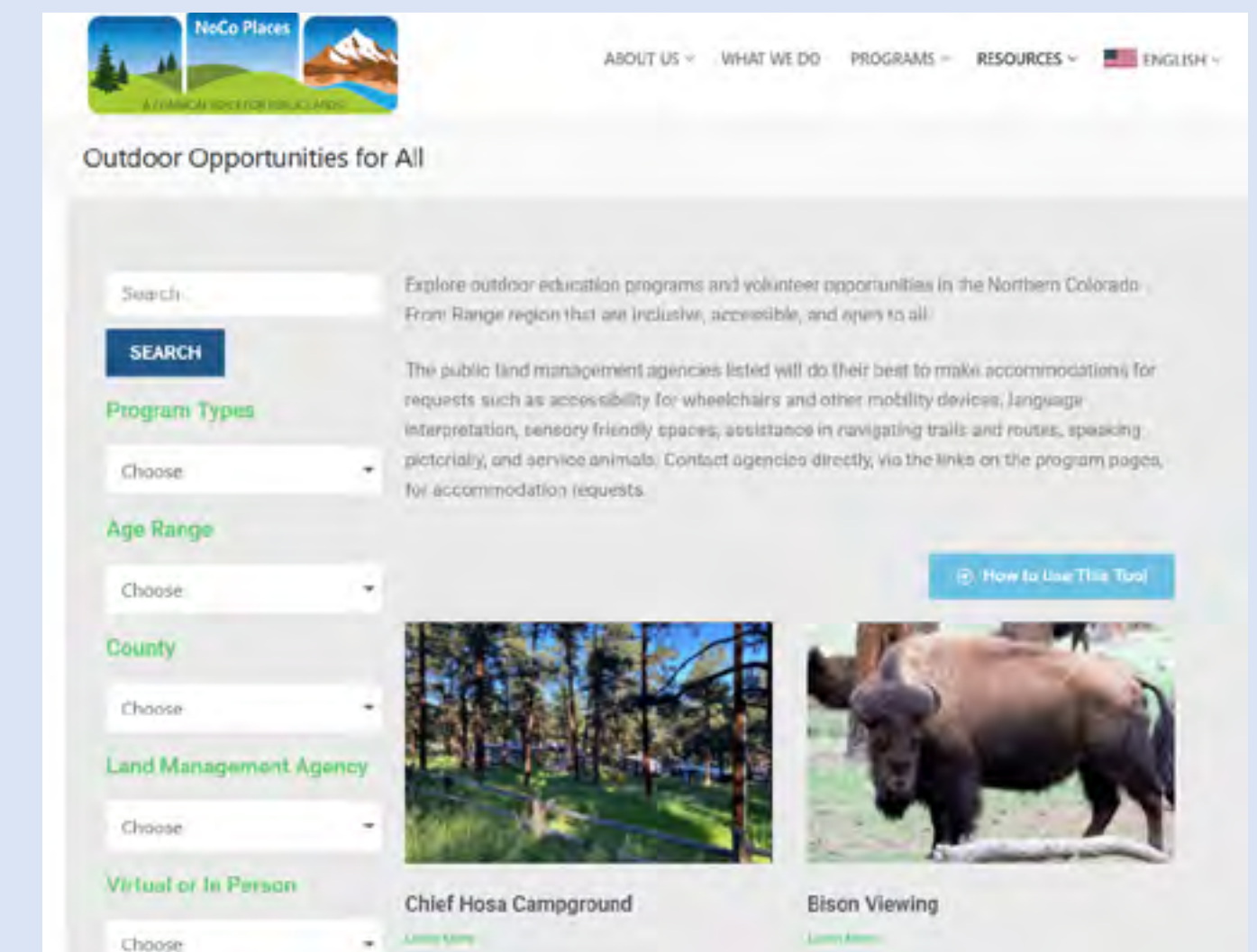
53%
increase in web
traffic over
previous year

Regional Resource for Outdoor Programs and Volunteering

The Outdoors for All work group identified a need to show outdoor programs and volunteer opportunities available to all in the NoCo region in one central place. A new web tool was developed to display 86 available programs and volunteer opportunities, with user-friendly filtering. This allows users to find what they are looking for in a way that makes sense to them.

The resource launched in the summer of 2025, in both English and Spanish. A [tutorial video](#) was created to guide users in navigating the tool. In 2026, printed flyers with a QR code linking to the resource will be used at events.

[View the Outdoor Opportunities for All Resource](#)



BRAND REFRESH

New Year, New Look

In 2026, NoCo Places is receiving a fresh coat of paint. The coalition is rolling out a brand refresh in the form of a new logo and color palette. This refresh elevates our branding to a new level and better reflects the layers of different public lands that make up our coalition.



New Branded Items

The new logo will be shown on clothing for use by NoCo staff and volunteers at upcoming workshops and events, as well as on various marketing collateral.



06 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Planning for sustainable operations

NON-PROFIT STATUS

In 2026, NoCo Places will undergo a transformation. Our coalition will evolve into a certified non-profit entity. Non-profit status will expand and sustain NoCo's long-term collaborative stewardship and community engagement work. Our activities will continue to include regional coordination, public engagement, data and planning support, shared stewardship programs, capacity-building for agencies, and new program development.

This will allow NoCo to open up a new funding mechanism, helping to expand what we can do with our programs born from the Conservation and Recreation Vision, as well as with our communications.

As we look towards the future, non-profit status will benefit the coalition when embarking on new projects:

- Unauthorized trails rehabilitation project with grant funding from CPW
- Trail ambassador stewardship program
- Interagency tribal relations support

As part of this transition, the NoCo Places website will be revamped to reflect the new status and will feature a donation function.

We have the opportunity to build off the foundation we set through years of strategic planning and a shared Conservation and Recreation Vision. Now is the time to put our hard work and planning into action, and move into the next phase of our growth.



Gilpin County



*Boulder County
Photo by Jeff Moline*

06 MEMBER SPOTLIGHTS

Former Executive Committee members

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT

& FAREWELL



“NoCo Places unites leaders and stakeholders from across our beautiful Northern Front Range. Together we are enhancing conservation efforts across boundaries and engaging diverse communities to get out on public lands. Our collaboration reinforces the stewardship ethic of the people of Colorado in ways that will sustain us for generations to come!”

~Therese

Therese Glowacki

In her early 20s, Therese found her calling to helping restore wild places.

“While riding through Nevada, I saw a huge mine that had stripped half a mountain. That night, as we wound down, I thought about how that mountain was going to heal: Is that a job, restoring the land after we humans have pillaged a place? I was overwhelmed with the sense that this could be a calling, helping restore wild places.”

When Therese finished college, she joined the Peace Corps and went to Senegal with a program called Agro-forestry. Then, 26 years ago, she was hired by Boulder County Parks & Open Space. The job was a new one for the department: Manager of the Resource Management Division.

As director, she was involved in the land-changing practice of purchasing open space and developing new parks. Examples are Haystack Mountain, and Prairie Run.

Therese represented Boulder County on the NoCo Places Executive Committee. Her commitment to the coalition was strong; she was a steady presence who shared her insightful and valuable perspective on regional challenges. For NoCo Places, she was a connector and collaborator, always ready to bridge gaps and move things forward.

NoCo expresses its gratitude to Therese for her invaluable contributions to the Executive Committee.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SPOTLIGHT

& FAREWELL



Tom Hoby

Tom Hoby has spent his 40+ year career in public and nonprofit parks, recreation, and open space management. He joined Jefferson County Open Space 15 years ago as the Director and shepherded the organization into new avenues of conservation and recreation.

Under his leadership, Jefferson County Open Space preserved nearly 10,000 acres of open space and parklands. He oversaw the development of major trails and helped expand the county's trail network to over 269 miles, supporting healthy nature based experiences for residents and visitors alike.

A legacy trail project that was born under Tom's leadership is the Clear Creek Trail (formerly the Peaks to Plains Trail). This critical statewide regional connector has seen multiple segments of completion within Jefferson County's Clear Creek Canyon Park over the past decade.

Tom represented Jefferson County on the NoCo Places Executive Committee. His contributions to the coalition were often game changers, new perspectives, and encouragement to forge new paths. For NoCo Places, Tom was an innovator and a strategist, helping the group to tackle regional challenges in new ways.

NoCo expresses its gratitude to Tom for his invaluable contributions to the Executive Committee.

"I have always believed that none of us are as good as, or as smart as, all of us, and that the greatest thing we can spend our life on is something that will outlast it. NoCo Places is about talented and passionate people, land managers and partners alike, coming together for a great common cause...caring for and being a voice for our cherished public lands. Together we crafted a Conservation and Recreation Vision with strategies to provide quality outdoor opportunities for all, expand outdoor ethics and trail courtesy education, protect important natural and cultural resources, restore impacted areas, and manage human and climate impacts on public lands to ensure they are thriving and available for current and future generations to enjoy and appreciate. Action is more important than words, let's get to work!"

~Tom

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