COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE FUTURE FUNDING STUDY

WHY THIS STUDY?

Colorado Parks and Wildlife commissioned this study to develop a list of potential alternative funding sources and gauge user groups’ perspectives through stakeholder consultations and research. CPW hopes to:

- Diversify agency funding sources
- Address long-term funding needs
- Increase user engagement through new funding sources

Stakeholder Funding Priorities

- **Outdoor recreation priorities:** Fund trail maintenance and development, improve access, support planning processes, and minimize the impacts of outdoor recreation.
- **Wildlife management priorities:** Support the State Wildlife Access plan, establish and support long-term wildlife programs, and manage non-game species.
- **Conservation goals:** Support clean water and open space.

Overarching Stakeholder Feedback

- **Build a broad constituency of supporters for CPW.**
- **Maintain a high degree of transparency for where the funding goes with user-pays mechanisms.**
- **Use new funding to address stakeholder priorities**
- **User-pays mechanisms should support some user benefits.**
- **User-pays mechanisms should not limit equal access to public lands.**

Colorado Context

- **Combined parks and wildlife agency:** Although combined under one agency, CPW is required by law to maintain two separate budgets.
- **Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR):** Colorado’s TABOR law makes passing new tax bills difficult, and CPW currently maintains a beneficial enterprise exemption status because 90% of its funding comes from non-tax sources. Receiving additional tax dollars would compromise this status.

The full study is available on Meridian Institute’s website: [http://merid.org/Content/Projects/Colorado_Parks_Wildlife_Future_Funding_Mechanisms_Study.aspx](http://merid.org/Content/Projects/Colorado_Parks_Wildlife_Future_Funding_Mechanisms_Study.aspx)
TAXES

GENERAL SALES TAX
Description: Increasing general sales tax (1/8 of 1%) to dedicate revenue
Revenue: $128 million
Considerations: CPW would lose its enterprise exemption status, but this is an equitable funding model that has the potential to provide stable, long-term funding for CPW.

DEDICATED REVENUE FROM EXISTING SALES TAX
Description: Earmarking a portion of existing sales tax revenue on outdoor gear sales
Revenue: $36—42 million
Considerations: There are political challenges inherent with shifting tax revenue from other priorities to parks and wildlife; it would need to pass as a constitutional amendment to ensure long-term funding; it ties user pays to user benefits.

EXCISE TAX ON OUTDOOR GEAR
Description: Taxing outdoor gear to dedicate revenue
Revenue: Dependent on tax rate
Considerations: The Outdoor Industry Association strongly opposes this measure, and CPW would lose enterprise exemption, it has been very successful for hunting and fishing gear and represents a user-pays tax model.

FEES

VEHICLE REGISTRATION FEE
Description: Assigning a fee to support state parks at vehicle registration (opt-in, opt-out, or mandatory)
Revenue: $11—21.6 million
Considerations: This could lower the cost for residents to access state parks and raise significant funds, but funds may not be applicable for the wildlife side of CPW, and a mandatory or opt-out fee could implicate people who don’t use state parks.

MOUNTAIN BIKE REGISTRATION FEE
Description: Requiring mountain bikers to purchase an annual registration fee (either per rider, per bike, or a hybrid model)
Revenue: $6.1—11.5 million
Considerations: There are logistical considerations, including scope, implementation, and enforcement; there is support for the existing OHV programs and an appetite in the mountain bike community for something similar; funding would likely support trails.

NON-MOTORIZED BOAT REGISTRATION FEE
Description: Assigning an annual registration fee for non-motorized boaters, similar to the existing motorized program.
Revenue: $3.8—7.6 million, before enforcement costs
Considerations: There is an existing structure in place through the motorized program; but enforcement would be challenging for river vessels, and the non-motorized community does not see direct user benefits from CPW and did not support this mechanism.

COLORADO OUTDOOR STAMP
Description: Requiring outdoor recreation users of any kind to purchase an annual pass to support conservation, outdoor recreation, and wildlife
Revenue: $9.5—28.5 million, before enforcement costs
Considerations: Additional logistical and conceptual considerations are needed, and it would require significant education and engagement efforts; it implicates all users equitably and represents a user-pays model.

INCENTIVIZED CONTRIBUTIONS

INCENTIVIZED HABITAT STAMP CONTRIBUTION
Description: Encouraging voluntary purchases of a habitat stamp or general donations to CPW by targeting membership organizations, outfitters, or other intervention points.
Revenue: Unknown
Considerations: This is not a stable, long-term funding source, and past voluntary approaches in Colorado have been unsuccessful; for membership organizations, the administrative burden of collecting fees for CPW could be significant.

TECHNOLOGY-BASED VOLUNTARY DONATIONS
Description: Leveraging technology, especially smartphones, to encourage voluntary giving.
Revenue: Unknown
Considerations: This is not a stable, long-term funding source, but there are no significant risks associated with this approach and technology could help CPW engage a wider range of stakeholders and outdoor users.