

**First Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO**

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 25-0994.01 Clare Haffner x6137

HOUSE BILL 25-1323

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Lukens and Taggart,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Roberts,

House Committees

Agriculture, Water & Natural Resources

Senate Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 **CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIVISION OF PARKS AND**
102 **WILDLIFE TO ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.**

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

The bill clarifies that the division of parks and wildlife in the department of natural resources (division) is the primary entity responsible for outdoor recreation management and infrastructure planning in the state.

The bill requires the division to support the planning, development, and maintenance of infrastructure and access projects to

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the state. In doing so, the division is required to balance and integrate outdoor recreation efforts with statewide conservation efforts. In collaboration with federal, local, and tribal partners, the division is tasked with developing regional outdoor recreation and conservation plans that will, among other endeavors, consider sustainable and climate-resilient strategies for outdoor recreation and conservation planning and employ data-driven management of public lands and regional outdoor recreational resources.

The bill also requires the division to develop a river recreation program. To implement the river recreation program, the division is required to, in collaboration with the Colorado water conservation board, the outdoor recreation industry office, and other state agencies or stakeholders:

- Build a statewide coalition of river recreation, stewardship, and safety managers;
- Coordinate with river basin roundtables, local governments, and other appropriate stakeholders to align river recreation efforts with existing water management strategies;
- Align river recreation management with state and regional water planning efforts regarding conservation to address the impact of climate change on aquatic ecosystems;
- Identify high-priority rivers and recreation areas to support improvements;
- Enhance river data collection, mapping, and public access to information; and
- Promote river safety and stewardship opportunities through initiatives such as hazard removal, signage improvements, and collaborative partnerships.

Under current law, the parks and wildlife commission (commission) is responsible for establishing a state trails system. The bill requires the division to consult and cooperate with appropriate entities to establish a nonmotorized and a year-round motorized trails program to support the planning, development, and stewardship of trail systems that are designed for nonmotorized and motorized use, respectively. The division is required to establish and operate the nonmotorized and motorized trails programs in a manner that protects, preserves, enhances, and manages the natural, scenic, and recreation areas of the state.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Short title.** The short title of this act is the
3 "Colorado Parks and Wildlife Outdoor Recreation Enhancement Act".

1 **SECTION 2. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
2 finds and declares that:

3 (a) It is the policy of the state of Colorado to protect, preserve,
4 enhance, and manage the state's unparalleled landscapes, wildlife, and
5 public lands for the benefit and enjoyment of its residents and visitors.
6 Recognizing that outdoor recreation, conservation, and wildlife are vital
7 components of Colorado's identity, economy, and quality of life, the
8 general assembly declares its commitment to ensuring the continued
9 availability of exceptional and sustainable recreation opportunities while
10 prioritizing the conservation of the state's natural resources.

11 (b) The state affirms the continued importance of the division of
12 parks and wildlife's mission to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the
13 state, provide a high-quality state parks system, and deliver outdoor
14 recreation opportunities that inspire stewardship and conservation for
15 current and future generations;

16 (c) The general assembly further restates its commitment, pursuant
17 to section 33-9-101, Colorado Revised Statutes, that a comprehensive
18 program that is designed to offer the greatest possible variety of
19 recreation opportunities to state residents and visitors is provided by the
20 division of parks and wildlife;

21 (d) The latest data shows that outdoor recreation contributes to a
22 total economic output of \$65.8 billion, which supports 404,000 jobs and
23 represents 8.5% of the state's gross domestic product and 12.5% of the
24 state's labor force. The state's outdoor recreation industry office within the
25 office of economic development plays a vital role in advancing outdoor
26 recreation, with a mission to champion industry, communities, and people
27 to come to life through Colorado's great outdoors. The outdoor recreation

1 industry office is a vital partner for the division of parks and wildlife in
2 coordinating outdoor recreation industry partnerships for the advancement
3 of sustained and sustainable outdoor recreation.

4 (e) The great outdoors Colorado program, established pursuant to
5 article XXVII of the state constitution, is a leading conservation and
6 outdoor recreation funding partner in the state and a close partner with the
7 division of parks and wildlife in conservation and outdoor recreation
8 funding and planning;

9 (f) Federal public lands not managed by the state encompass 24.1
10 million acres, or 36%, of the state and provide the venue for a significant
11 amount of the state's outdoor recreation and conservation needs and
12 opportunities. Given the significant role of federal public lands for the
13 state's outdoor recreation industry, tourism, wildlife, and natural
14 resources, it is in the state's interest to take an active role in the health of
15 Colorado's federal public lands, wildlife, and outdoor recreation
16 infrastructure through partnership with federal land management
17 agencies, wildlife conservation, and other opportunities with federally
18 managed public lands where available.

19 (g) Up-front coordination, planning, and proactive efforts by the
20 division of parks and wildlife to promote outdoor recreation
21 opportunities, infrastructure, and management that integrate the many
22 needs of Colorado's outdoors, wildlife, and public lands ultimately lessen
23 conflict and promote efficiency that will yield mutually beneficial
24 outcomes and support and maintain Colorado's world-class outdoor
25 recreation and natural resources and experiences.

26 (2) The general assembly further finds and declares that there is
27 a need to expand and strengthen the division of parks and wildlife's

1 capacity for the planning, development, coordination, and management
2 of Colorado's exceptional and sustainable outdoor recreation to ensure the
3 state's recreation opportunities provide high-quality visitor experiences
4 and are responsibly managed to protect natural resources, wildlife, private
5 property, and public safety by:

6 (a) Enhancing outdoor recreation management, coordination, and
7 planning within the division of parks and wildlife by enhancing the
8 capacity of the division to proactively address outdoor recreation needs
9 and impacts in the state and by enabling the division to serve as the state's
10 primary resource for outdoor recreation planning, sustainable visitor use
11 management, and outdoor recreation infrastructure planning and
12 development;

13 (b) Officially establishing a trails program within the division of
14 parks and wildlife to promote sustainable and accessible trail systems that
15 are integrated with existing state trail systems and recreation networks,
16 enhance public health, and improve outdoor recreation opportunities; and

17 (c) Creating a unified framework to manage and enhance
18 Colorado's rivers for recreation, safety, and conservation through a newly
19 created river recreation program, which will address critical challenges,
20 optimize resources, and promote sustainable and safe use of the state's
21 world-class waterways while supporting local economies and outdoor
22 enthusiasts.

23 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 33-10-119 and
24 33-10-120 as follows:

25 **33-10-119. Outdoor recreation planning and management -**
26 **duties of the division - regional plans - legislative declaration.** (1) THE
27 GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT:

1 (a) OUTDOOR RECREATION, CONSERVATION, AND WILDLIFE
2 REQUIRE A DIVERSE NETWORK OF PUBLIC LANDS AND WATERWAYS THAT
3 ARE ACCESSIBLE, CLIMATE-RESILIENT, AND PROPERLY MANAGED;

4 (b) PUBLIC LANDS SUPPORT THE PUBLIC'S DESIRE TO CONNECT
5 WITH THE STATE'S LANDSCAPES WHILE ENSURING LONG-TERM
6 STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES; AND

7 (c) IN RECOGNITION OF THE NECESSITY OF PROACTIVE PLANNING
8 AND MANAGEMENT TO PROTECT LAND, WATER, AND WILDLIFE WHILE
9 MAINTAINING HIGH-QUALITY RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES, THE STATE
10 RECOGNIZES THE DIVISION AS THE CENTRAL HUB FOR OUTDOOR
11 RECREATION PLANNING, SUSTAINABLE VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT, AND
12 REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP COORDINATION.

13 (2) AS THE PRIMARY AGENCY FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION
14 PLANNING, SUSTAINABLE VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT, AND REGIONAL
15 PARTNERSHIP COORDINATION, THE DIVISION SHALL:

16 (a) SUPPORT THE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND MAINTENANCE
17 OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS PROJECTS TO ADVANCE HIGH-QUALITY
18 OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN ALIGNMENT WITH COLORADO'S
19 STATEWIDE VISION TO BALANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND
20 CONSERVATION, ENSURING THAT BOTH RECREATION ACCESS AND
21 CONSERVATION NEEDS ARE MET THROUGH INTEGRATED PLANNING
22 EFFORTS;

23 (b) PROVIDE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO OUTDOOR RECREATION
24 DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT THAT FOSTERS OUTCOMES SUPPORTING
25 IMPROVED RECREATION, CONSERVATION, AND WILDLIFE HABITAT
26 PROTECTION;

27 (c) COORDINATE AND ALIGN OUTDOOR RECREATION AND

1 CONSERVATION EFFORTS STATEWIDE TO ENSURE THAT RECREATION
2 PLANNING IS CONSISTENT WITH CONSERVATION PRIORITIES AND CLIMATE
3 RESILIENCE STRATEGIES; AND

4 (d) DEVELOP REGIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION AND
5 CONSERVATION PLANS THAT COORDINATE AND ALIGN WITH THE
6 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN, DEVELOPED
7 PURSUANT TO SECTION 33-10-108 (1)(c), AND THE STATE'S VISION FOR
8 BALANCING RECREATION AND CONSERVATION. IN CREATING THE PLANS,
9 THE DIVISION SHALL:

10 (I) COLLABORATE WITH FEDERAL, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL
11 GOVERNMENT PARTNERS; LOCAL COMMUNITIES; PRIVATE LANDOWNERS;
12 RECREATION STAKEHOLDERS; CONSERVATION STAKEHOLDERS; AND
13 WILDLIFE STAKEHOLDERS;

14 (II) COLLABORATE WITH STATE GOVERNMENT ENTITIES AND
15 ASSOCIATED PARTNERS, SUCH AS THE OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY
16 OFFICE, THE GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO PROGRAM, AND OTHERS, TO
17 SEEK IMPROVED COORDINATION AND EFFICIENCY ACROSS STATE
18 GOVERNMENT PARTNERS;

19 (III) CONSIDER PROACTIVE APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF
20 EXCEPTIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES
21 AND INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH COORDINATED PLANNING THAT ALSO
22 SUPPORTS IMPROVED CONSERVATION;

23 (IV) EMPLOY SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES FOR OUTDOOR
24 RECREATION AND CONSERVATION, INCLUDING SUPPORTING PARTNERSHIPS
25 WITH FEDERAL AGENCIES, TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS, AND LOCAL
26 JURISDICTIONS TO ADDRESS OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL NEEDS ON PUBLIC
27 LANDS ACROSS JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES;

1 (V) PURSUE DATA-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PUBLIC
2 LANDS AND REGIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL RESOURCES;

3 (VI) EMPLOY CLIMATE RESILIENCE STRATEGIES FOR REGIONAL
4 OUTDOOR RECREATION AND CONSERVATION PLANNING; AND

5 (VII) ENSURE EACH REGIONAL PLAN IS CONSISTENT WITH THE
6 STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN AND THE
7 STATE'S VISION TO BALANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION AND CONSERVATION.

8 **33-10-120. River recreation program - created - division**
9 **duties.** (1) THE STATE REAFFIRMS ITS COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING,
10 ENHANCING, AND MANAGING STATE RIVERS AND WATERWAYS TO SUPPORT
11 SUSTAINABLE OUTDOOR RECREATION, CONSERVATION, AND PUBLIC
12 SAFETY. IN RECOGNITION OF THE VITAL ROLE THAT THE STATE'S RIVERS
13 PLAY IN RECREATION, LOCAL ECONOMIES, AND ECOLOGICAL HEALTH, THE
14 DIVISION SHALL DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE RIVER RECREATION PROGRAM
15 WITH THE GOALS OF EQUITABLE ACCESS, RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP,
16 PRIVATE PROPERTY PROTECTION, AQUATIC HEALTH, AND ENHANCED
17 SAFETY MEASURES FOR STATE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.

18 (2) IN ESTABLISHING THE RIVER RECREATION PROGRAM, THE
19 DIVISION SHALL:

20 (a) BUILD A STATEWIDE COALITION OF RIVER RECREATION,
21 STEWARDSHIP, AND SAFETY MANAGERS AND ADVOCATES TO ENSURE
22 ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY STAKEHOLDERS TO HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF
23 THE STATE'S RIVER RECREATION POLICIES;

24 (b) COORDINATE WITH BASIN ROUNDTABLES CREATED PURSUANT
25 TO SECTION 37-75-104, STREAM MANAGEMENT PLANNING GROUPS,
26 OUTDOOR REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE
27 LANDOWNERS, AND OTHER REGIONAL ENTITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS TO

1 ALIGN RIVER RECREATION EFFORTS WITH EXISTING WATER MANAGEMENT
2 STRATEGIES;

3 (c) ALIGN RIVER RECREATION MANAGEMENT WITH STATE AND
4 REGIONAL WATER PLANNING EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT RECREATION
5 OPPORTUNITIES COMPLEMENT CONSERVATION PRIORITIES AND ADDRESS
6 THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS;

7 (d) IDENTIFY HIGH-PRIORITY RIVERS AND RECREATION AREAS TO
8 SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS, CONSERVATION MEASURES,
9 AND SAFETY ENHANCEMENTS;

10 (e) ENHANCE RIVER DATA COLLECTION, MAPPING, AND PUBLIC
11 ACCESS TO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT PROJECT PLANNING, VISITOR USE
12 MANAGEMENT, AND SAFE RIVER ACCESS BY ESTABLISHING A CENTRALIZED
13 SYSTEM TO SHARE INFORMATION ON RIVER CONDITIONS; AND

14 (f) PROMOTE RIVER SAFETY AND STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
15 THROUGH INITIATIVES SUCH AS HAZARD REMOVAL, SIGNAGE
16 IMPROVEMENTS, AND COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS.

17 (3) IN IMPLEMENTING THIS SECTION, THE DIVISION SHALL
18 COLLABORATE WITH THE COLORADO WATER CONSERVATION BOARD
19 CREATED IN SECTION 37-60-102, THE OUTDOOR RECREATION INDUSTRY
20 OFFICE CREATED IN SECTION 24-48.5-129, AND APPLICABLE STATE
21 AGENCIES, FEDERAL AGENCIES, TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS, LOCAL
22 GOVERNMENTS, OR OTHER STAKEHOLDERS.

23 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-11-102, **add** (4)
24 as follows:

25 **33-11-102. Legislative declaration.** (4) A FURTHER PURPOSE OF
26 THIS ARTICLE 11 IS TO PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF
27 A NONMOTORIZED TRAILS PROGRAM AND A YEAR-ROUND MOTORIZED

1 TRAILS PROGRAM TO SUPPORT THE PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND
2 STEWARDSHIP OF TRAIL SYSTEMS DESIGNED FOR NONMOTORIZED AND
3 MOTORIZED USE, RESPECTIVELY. THE NONMOTORIZED TRAILS PROGRAM
4 AND YEAR-ROUND MOTORIZED TRAILS PROGRAM SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED
5 AND OPERATED IN A MANNER THAT PROTECTS, PRESERVES, ENHANCES,
6 AND MANAGES THE NATURAL, SCENIC, AND RECREATIONAL AREAS OF THE
7 STATE.

8 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-11-108, **add** (6)
9 as follows:

10 **33-11-108. State trails system.** (6) IN ESTABLISHING A STATE
11 TRAILS SYSTEM PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION, THE DIVISION SHALL
12 IMPLEMENT A COORDINATED APPROACH TO NONMOTORIZED AND
13 YEAR-ROUND MOTORIZED TRAILS TO ENSURE A COHESIVE AND
14 COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE TRAILS NETWORK THAT IS PLANNED
15 THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES TO ACHIEVE STATE CONSERVATION
16 AND RECREATION GOALS, ALIGN WITH COLORADO'S STATEWIDE VISION
17 FOR BALANCING RECREATION AND CONSERVATION, AND EMPLOY BEST
18 PRACTICES FOR STATE LAND MANAGERS, TRAIL ADVOCATES, AND
19 CONSERVATIONISTS ENGAGED IN TRAIL PLANNING.

20 **SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 33-11-109, **amend**
21 (2) and (3) as follows:

22 **33-11-109. Trail categories - rules.** (2) (a) The planning and
23 designation of trails for the state trails system shall take into account and
24 give due regard to the interests of federal agencies, state agencies, TRIBAL
25 GOVERNMENTS, individuals, and interested recreation organizations.

26 (b) The categories set forth in subsection (1) of this section need
27 not be used to label specific trails, but the division shall ~~assure~~ ENSURE

1 that full consideration is given to including trails from all categories
2 within the system.

3 (c) THE DIVISION SHALL ENSURE THAT FULL CONSIDERATION IS
4 GIVEN TO INCLUDING NONMOTORIZED AND YEAR-ROUND MOTORIZED
5 TRAILS WITHIN THE SYSTEM.

6 (3) The commission, through the division, is authorized to conduct
7 studies and to ~~promulgate~~ ADOPT such rules as may be necessary for
8 establishing and managing the Colorado greenway trails system. The
9 commission shall consult and cooperate with the Colorado water
10 conservation board, THE transportation commission, THE Colorado water
11 resources and power development authority, and all other appropriate
12 units of state government and political subdivisions of the state, including
13 any county, city, city and county, and water conservation and conservancy
14 district; any other public and private persons; ~~and~~ any appropriate federal
15 agencies; AND ANY APPROPRIATE TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS, to establish a
16 Colorado greenway trails system AND NONMOTORIZED AND MOTORIZED
17 TRAILS PROGRAMS that ~~minimizes~~ MINIMIZE adverse impacts on activities,
18 natural features, and sensitive habitats adjacent to trails.

19 **SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
20 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
21 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
22 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
23 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this
24 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take
25 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
26 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
27 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.