

COLORADO NATIONAL FORESTS

VITAL TO PEOPLE, WILDLIFE AND THE ECONOMY



THE NATIONAL FORESTS of Colorado are a natural treasure highly valued by the state's residents. These public lands support an abundance of wildlife—including many imperiled species—protect pristine wilderness, supply critical drinking water and are integral to economic growth in the state, especially the booming recreation and tourism industries. Conserving Colorado's national forests and grasslands protects all these important values.

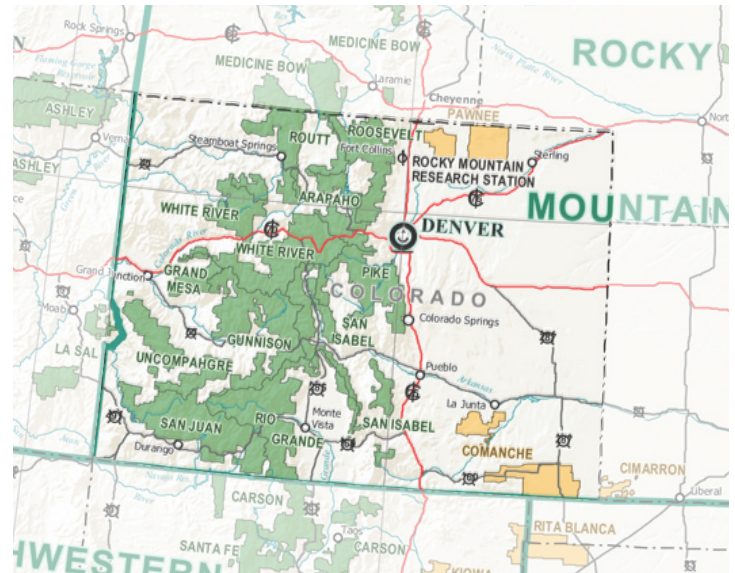
Habitat for Wildlife

Black bears, elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, bighorn sheep, mountain goats, mountain lions, bobcats, beavers, marmots, bald eagles, dusky grouse, native trout and many other animals and plants inhabit the national forests of the Centennial State.

At least 16 species listed as candidate, threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act also depend on these public lands, including Canada lynx, greenback cutthroat trout, lesser prairie-chickens, southwestern willow flycatchers and Uncompagne fritillary butterflies.

Wilderness for Conservation and Recreation

More than 3.1 million acres of national forests in Colorado are congressionally designated wilderness areas. The largest, the Flat Tops Wilderness in the Routt and White River national forests, protects approximately 110 lakes and



Colorado has 11 national forests and two national grasslands, totaling about 14.5 million acres.

ponds, 100 miles of fishable streams and other valuable wildlife habitat and offers more than 160 miles of trails for hunters, anglers, hikers, campers, birders, horseback riders and other recreationists.

Water for Communities

Forest Service lands provide an estimated 68 percent of Colorado's annual water supply.¹ The state has designated approximately 4,000 miles of streams in Forest Service wilderness and roadless areas as Outstanding Natural Resource Waters under the Clean Water Act, which offers some protection against future degradation of these waterways.

Coloradans Value Their Public Lands

98 percent believe public lands are an "essential part" of Colorado's economy.

85 percent believe the presence of public lands in the state helps to attract high-quality employers and good jobs.

74 percent oppose the sale of some public lands to reduce the budget deficit.

65 percent hike, **52 percent** camp, **34 percent** watch birds or other wildlife, **29 percent** mountain bike, and **38 percent** hunt or fish.

68 percent identify themselves as conservationists.

72 percent are more likely to favor a candidate for public office "who supports enhancing protections for some public lands like national forests.

74 percent are not likely to support a candidate "who voted to reduce funding for federal agencies which oversee public lands."

57 percent are likely to support a candidate "who votes for increased funding for agencies like the Forest Service."

Sources: Colorado College, State of the Rockies Project, 2013, 2014 Conservation in the West Polls



Within driving distance of Denver, Indian Peaks Wilderness in the Arapaho and Roosevelt national forests is one of the most visited wilderness areas in the United States.

An Engine for Economic Growth

Like other western states with a large percentage of public lands, Colorado is outpacing the nation in economic growth. The natural amenities found on national forests and other protected public lands give the state a competitive edge, attracting talent, investment and businesses and contributing to the state's high rate of employment and income growth.

Employment increased by 297 percent between 1970 and 2010 in rural counties in the West with land bases that are more than 20 percent protected federal lands and a whopping 345 percent in counties that are more than 30 percent protected lands.² These rural counties also have higher per-capita incomes (an average of \$4,360 more) than other rural counties in the region.³

National forests and other public lands are also a huge draw for economy-boosting resident and non-resident outdoor recreationists. Surveys found that 2.3

million people participated in wildlife-related recreation in Colorado in 2011.⁴ In addition, 22 of the state's 25 ski resorts are on national forest lands. These resorts, which are also popular for cycling and other activities in the off-season, drew more than 12 million visitors from 2013 to 2014.⁵

This recreational activity adds up to some impressive revenue for the state:

- More than \$1 billion from hunting and fishing related travel expenses and equipment and supply purchases (2011).⁶
- \$1.5 billion from wildlife watching (2011).⁷
- \$1.7 billion from ski resorts,⁸ including \$141 million to \$193 million from bicyclists visiting ski resorts in summer (2013-2014).⁹

¹ Brown, T. C. 2009. Estimated mean annual contribution to water supply from units of the National Forest System of the U.S. Forest Service. U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. Fort Collins, CO. (Sept. 18, 2009).

² Headwaters Economics. 2012. *West Is Best: Protected Lands Promote Montana Jobs and Higher Incomes*; available at <http://headwaterseconomics.org/land/west-is-best-value-of-public-lands-mt>. (accessed Jan. 26, 2015).

³ Ibid.

⁴ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau. 2011 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. (Revised February 2014).

⁵ Blevins, J. "Visits to Colorado ski resorts pacing toward another big season." *The Denver Post* (Jan. 21, 2015).

⁶ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kennedy, B. "Rocky Mountain high for Colorado ski industry." *Daily Finance* (Mar. 20, 2010).

⁹ Center for Research in Economic and Social Policy. Undated. *The Economic Impact of Bicycling in Colorado*. University of Colorado. Available at <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/CObikeEcon.pdf>.



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