Getting Away from it All:
How Increases in Visitation Are
Changing Public Land
Management

RMLUI 2021
WESTERN PLACES | WESTERN SPACES

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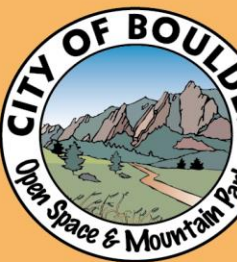
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ULI Colorado

KAPLAN KIRSCH ROCKWELL

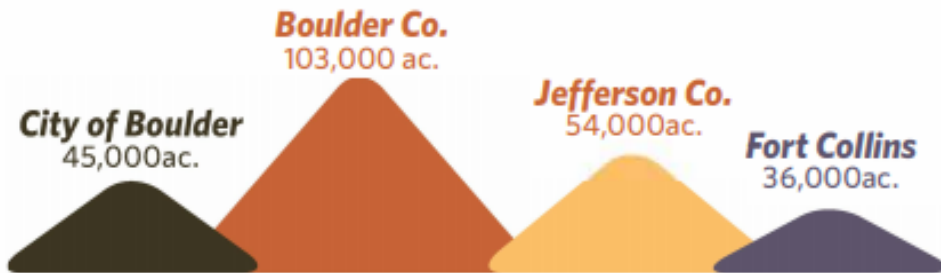**Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute**   **March 19, 2021**

Getting Away from it All: How Increases in Visitation are Changing Public Land Management

BOULDER'S OPEN SPACE AND MOUNTAIN PARKS TODAY: AN INTRODUCTION
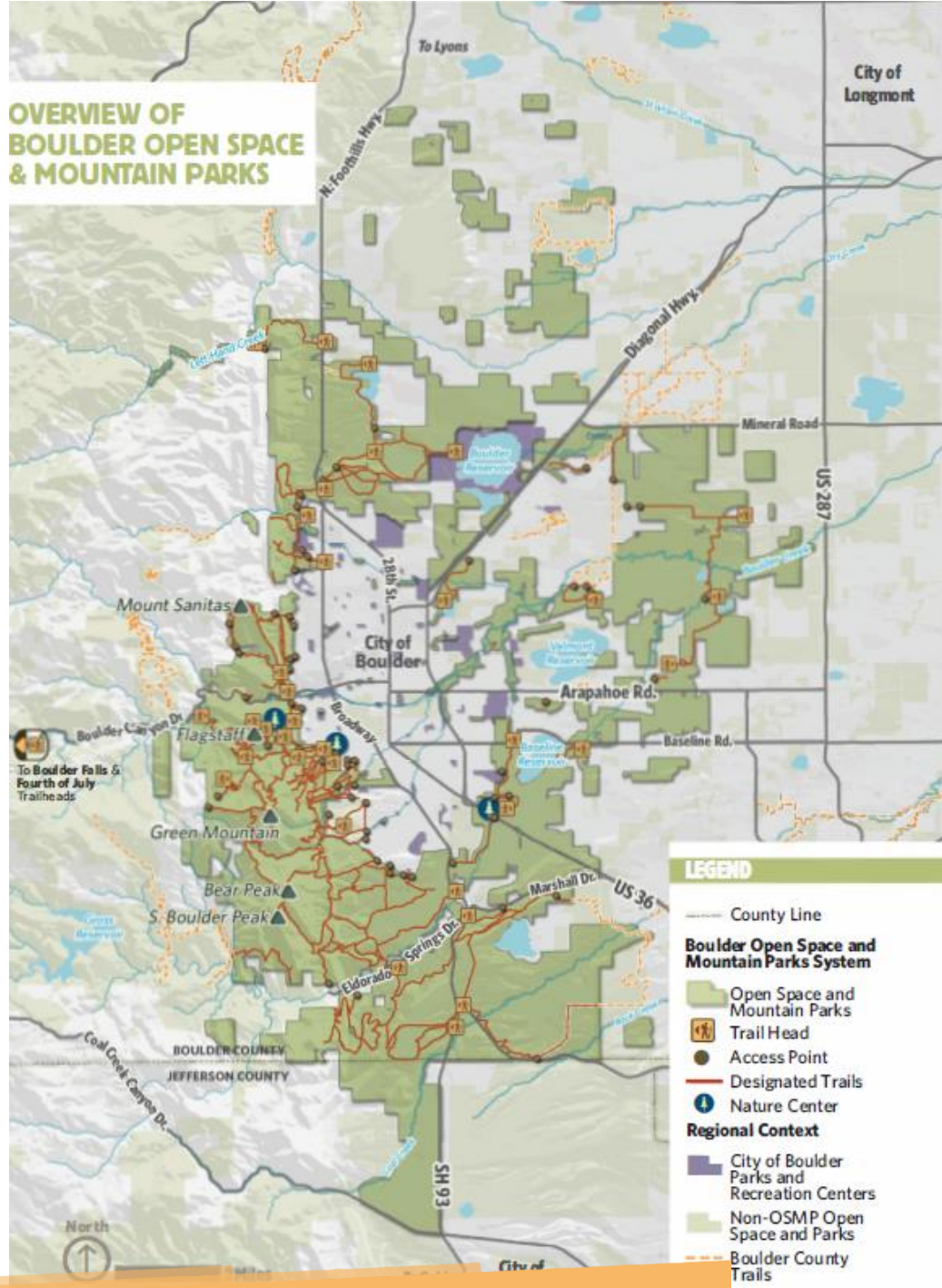
- **1967** - First municipality in country to employ sales tax to fund open space
- **45,000+ Acres**
- **6.25M Visits** each year (2017)
- **$33.5M Budget** (2016)
- **150+ Miles of trail**
- **37 Trailheads**
- **273+ Access points**

TOTAL ACRES MANAGED

City of Boulder 45,000ac.
Boulder Co. 103,000 ac.
Jefferson Co. 54,000ac.
Fort Collins 36,000ac.

MILES OF TRAIL MANAGED
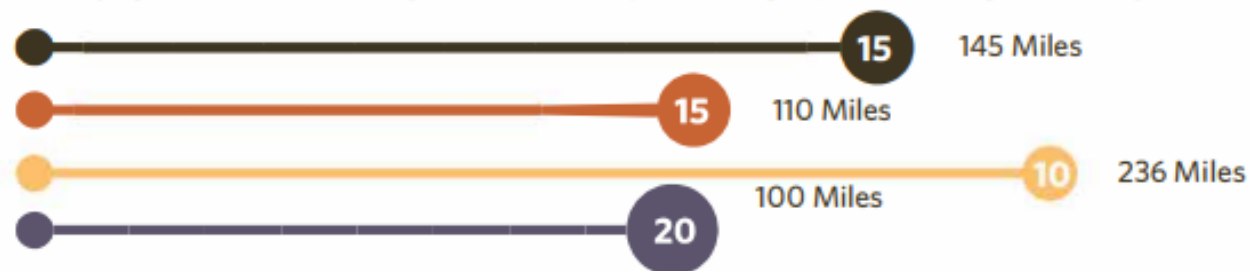
NUMBER OF RECREATION TYPES

15 — 145 Miles
15 — 110 Miles
10 — 236 Miles
20 — 100 Miles

USE	MILEAGE DESIGNED
Hiking	63
Mountain Biking	23
Authorized Motor Vehicle (Emergency Response and Maintenance Access Only)	44
Equestrian	20
Accessible	6

OVERVIEW OF BOULDER OPEN SPACE & MOUNTAIN PARKS

To Lyons

City of Longmont

City of Boulder

Mount Sanitas

Flagstaff

To Boulder Falls & Fourth of July Trailheads

Green Mountain

Bear Peak

S. Boulder Peak

Eldorado Springs Dr.

BOULDER COUNTY

JEFFERSON COUNTY

North

N. Foothills Hwy

Diagonal Hwy

Mineral Road

US 287

28th St.

Broadway

Arapahoe Rd.

Baseline Rd.

Marshall Dr.

US 36

SH 93

City of

LEGEND

------- County Line

Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks System

Open Space and Mountain Parks

Trail Head

Access Point

—— Designated Trails

Nature Center

Regional Context

City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Centers

Non-OSMP Open Space and Parks

Boulder County Trails

Regulations

Currently, our 85 regulations can be organized into the following categories:

- **Wildlife protection,** including off-trail limitations in Habitat Conservation areas (HCA's) and seasonal area closures for nesting birds.

- **Resource protection** measures that prohibit, for example, damaging property, collecting fossils and cutting trees;

- **Trail stewardship**, including muddy trail closures;

- **Public safety** measures surrounding weapons, firearms and safe trail etiquette;

- **Fire safety** including fireworks, campfires and smoking;

- **Oil and gas** regulations;

- **Range management** including grazing and horses;

- **Activities allowed only in designated areas**, such as fishing, camping, bolted climbing, horseback riding, mountain biking or dog walking including voice and sight control;

- **Limitations on other uses** include unmanned aerial vehicles or drones, model glider flying, hot air balloons and geocaching;

- **Prohibited activities** such as graffiti, fixed-heel skiing, hunting, littering, dumping and motorized vehicles;

- **Commercial use**, including permitting for competitive events, photography, filming and for-profit group trips;

- **Visitor parking**, including curfews and fees; and

- **Other prohibited conduct**, such as trespassing or use of alcohol, marijuana and glass containers.
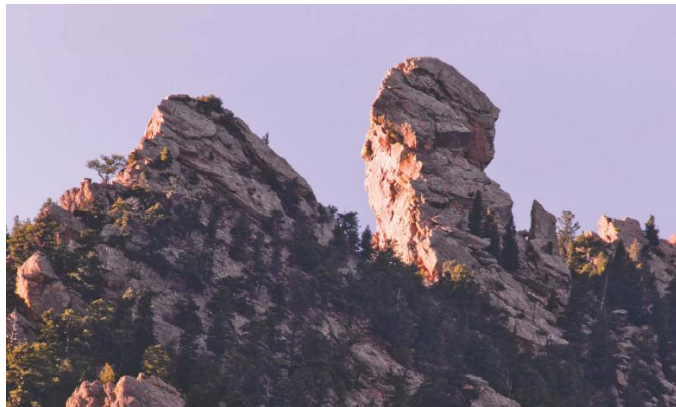
In addition, plans, policies, and regulations define activities that are not allowed on OSMP lands because they do not fit the criteria for passive recreation. These include:

- Motorized vehicles (e-bikes)*
- Hunting
- Organized sports, competitive events
- Paintball games
- Swimming (prohibited in lakes and ponds)
- Drones
- Commercial use without a permit
- Launching or landing of hot air balloons

*The City of Boulder complies with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In meeting the goal of accessibility, we work to ensure that visitors experiencing disabilities will be afforded experiences and opportunities commensurate with other visitors to the greatest extent practical.

City Charter

The City of Boulder's Charter provides the basis for most municipal functions, including the delivery of municipal services. Approved by city voters in 1986, **Article XII, Section 176** of the charter guides the way we manage open space and, as stewards of the City of Boulder's open space, we strive to fulfill these community-approved charter purposes. The Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) and City Council hold us accountable for the delivery of the broad charter policy statements listed below.

(a) **NATURAL AREAS AND FEATURES OR SPECIES OF SPECIAL VALUE**
Preservation or restoration of natural areas characterized by or including terrain, geologic formations, flora or fauna that are unusual, spectacular, historically important, scientifically valuable or unique, or that represent outstanding or rare examples of native species

(b) **WATER, LANDSCAPES AND ECOSYSTEMS**
Preservation of water resources in their natural or traditional state, scenic areas or vistas, wildlife habitats or fragile ecosystems

(c) **PASSIVE RECREATION**
Preservation of land for passive recreational use, such as hiking, photography or nature studies, and, if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding or fishing

(d) **AGRICULTURE**
Preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production

(e) **LIMITING SPRAWL**
Utilization of land for shaping the development of the city, limiting urban sprawl and disciplining growth

(f) **URBAN SHAPING**
Utilization of non-urban land for spatial definition of urban areas

(g) **FLOODPLAIN PROTECTION**
Utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains

(h) **AESTHETICS AND QUALITY OF LIFE**
Preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and its contribution to the quality of life of the community
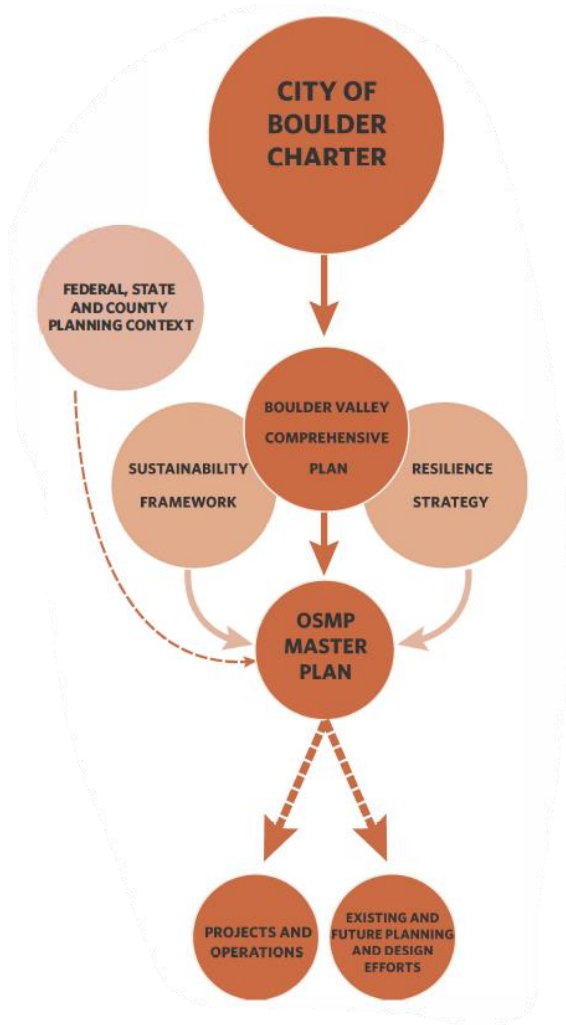
Open space land may not be improved after acquisition unless such improvements are necessary to protect or maintain the land or to provide for passive recreational, open agricultural, or wildlife habitat use of the land. (Added by Ord. No. 4996 (1986), 1, adopted by the electorate on Nov. 4, 1986.)

Photo by Ann G. Duncan

PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

The Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan and existing OSMP plans provide guidance at various scales for the delivery of OSMP's services to the Boulder community.

CITY OF BOULDER CHARTER

FEDERAL, STATE AND COUNTY PLANNING CONTEXT

BOULDER VALLEY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

RESILIENCE STRATEGY

OSMP MASTER PLAN

PROJECTS AND OPERATIONS

EXISTING AND FUTURE PLANNING AND DESIGN EFFORTS

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP)

The BVCP is developed and jointly adopted by the City of Boulder and Boulder County to guide land use decisions in the Boulder Valley. The BVCP supports the community's vision for balancing development and preservation of the Boulder Valley. Integral to the BVCP are the core values and guidance to achieve sustainability, intergovernmental cooperation, organized urban development, protection of open space and other policies.
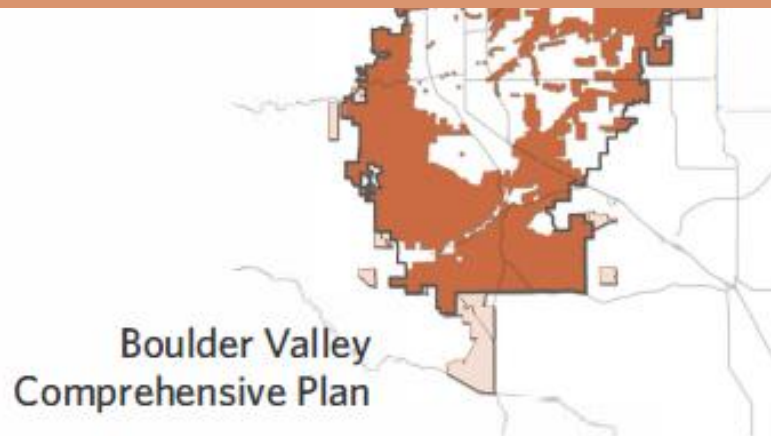
OSMP Plans

Since 1986, OSMP staff and the Boulder community have developed numerous plans to provide both general and specific guidance to inform the management of the city's open space lands and resources in accordance with the city charter. Existing OSMP plans provide guidance for managing resources and visitation.

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Forest Ecosystem Management Plan

Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan
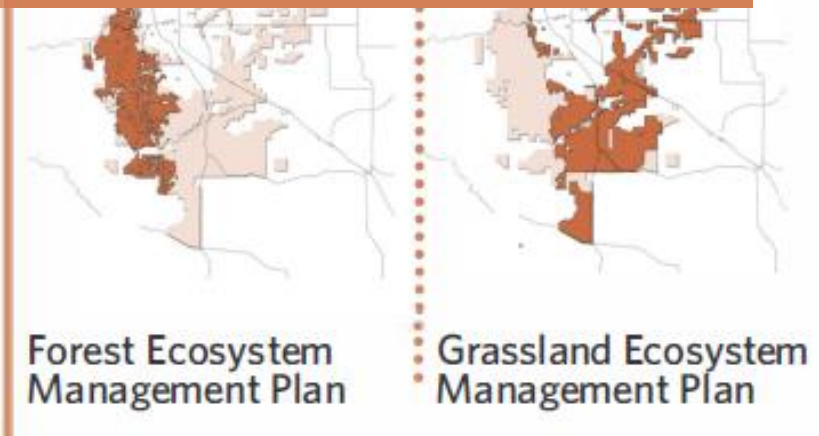
PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

CLIMATE COMMITMENT

1. An 80-percent reduction in community greenhouse gas emissions below 2005 levels by 2050;
2. One hundred percent renewable electricity by 2030; and
3. An 80-percent reduction in organization greenhouse gas emissions below 2008 levels by 2030.

RESILIENCE STRATEGY

1. Prepare all segments of our community for uncertainty and disruption by encouraging community preparedness, creating a culture of risk awareness and personalizing resilience;
2. Capitalize on the collective problem-solving and creativity of our community by leveraging advances in data, research and observations to address emerging resilience challenges; and
3. Embed resilience into city operations and systems by transforming our approach to community resilience.

BOULDER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (BCCP)

1. Growth should be channeled to municipalities;
2. Agricultural lands should be protected; and
3. Preservation of our environmental and natural resources should be a high priority in making land-use decisions.

PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

PLANNING FOR CHARTER PURPOSES

Since 1986, our staff and the Boulder community have developed 15 plans that guide the management of the open space system and its resources in accordance with the city charter.

- Open Space Long Range Management Policies
- Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan
- Forest Ecosystem Management Plan
- Agricultural Resources Management Plan
- Boulder Mountain Parks Resource Protection and Visitor Use Plan

- OSMP Acquisitions Update 2013-2019
- Visitor Master Plan
- Trail Study Area Plans/Area Management Plans
- Sombrero Marsh Site Management Plan
- Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Management Plan

A New Systemwide Master Plan

MASTER PLAN SYSTEM OVERVIEW

FEBRUARY 21, 2018

CITY OF BOULDER
Open Space & Mountain Parks

OUR LANDS.
OUR LEGACY.
OUR FUTURE.

GET INVOLVED AT OSMPMasterPlan.org

Focus Area: Responsible Recreation Stewardship and Enjoyment

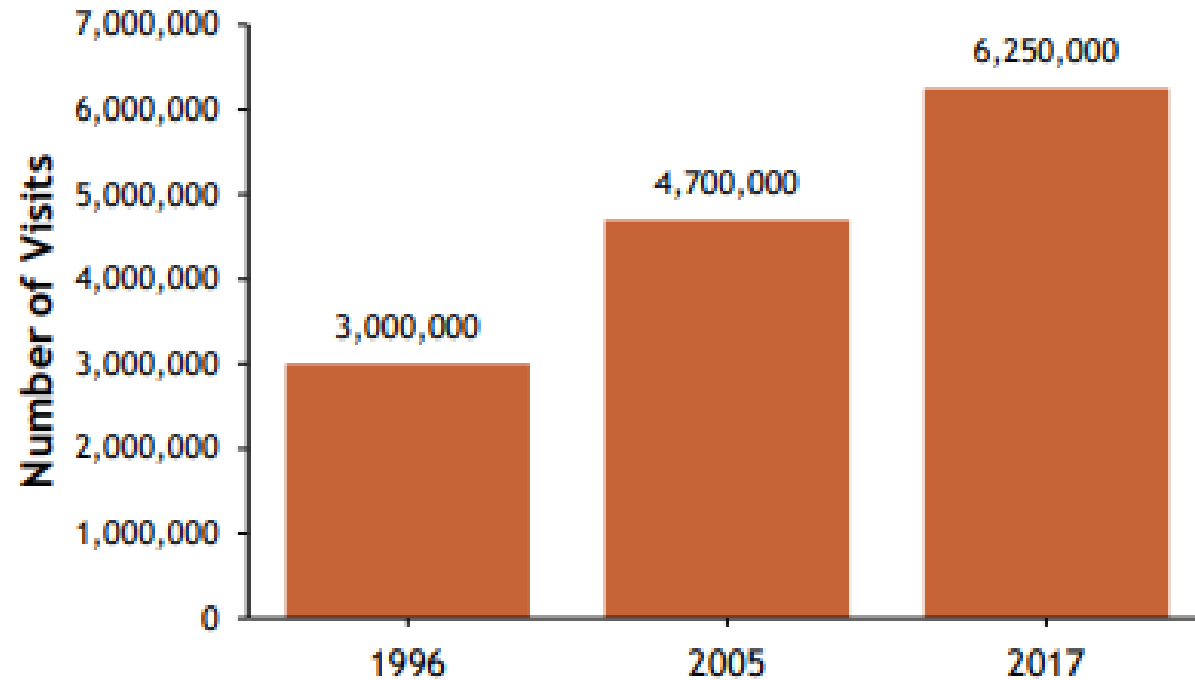① RRSE.1) ASSESS AND MANAGE INCREASING VISITATION:
Continue implementing measures from approved plans to mitigate impacts of increasing visitation in specific locations, while also updating the systemwide visitor use management plan to generate and implement ideas for understanding and addressing visitation growth throughout the system and to nurture stewardship and enjoyable visitor experiences.

② RRSE.4) ENCOURAGE MULTIMODAL ACCESS TO TRAILHEADS:
Explore and partner on a range of coordinated transportation and design solutions to reduce parking congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from visitor travel and promote active living, ecosystem health and public transportation.

PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Regional and Local Context Communities across Colorado's Front Range are anticipating significant population increases over the next three decades. By 2050, the Denver Boulder metro area could increase by 45 percent, or an additional 1.39 million people (Colorado Division of Local Affairs; State Demographer's Office, 2017). By 2040, the City of Boulder population is projected to increase nearly 12 percent, to 123,000 residents (City of Boulder, 2017).

Increasing OSMP Visitation Over Time

A bar chart titled "Increasing OSMP Visitation Over Time" with the y-axis labeled "Number of Visits" ranging from 0 to 7,000,000:
- 1996: 3,000,000
- 2005: 4,700,000
- 2017: 6,250,000

PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Open Space Long-Range Management Policies

Systemwide Management or Geographic Area Plans

Related Plans and Ongoing Needs

- **VISITOR MASTER PLAN**
- **TRAIL STUDY AREA PLANS**

Sustainability Framework:
Healthy and socially thriving community
Livable community
Accessible and connected community
Climate Commitment:
Clean Mobility

2010 City Council Identified Overarching Issue:
Multimodal access to and parking opportunities for OSMP visitors
Programs that promote public awareness of trail etiquette

- Provide for aesthetic enjoyment and provide for a passive recreation experience.
- OSMP developed facilities include passive recreation amenities, such as parking areas, picnic areas, regulation boards, trailheads, trails and bridges.
- Provide and maintain highly functional and sustainable visitor facilities.
- Ensure compatibility of passive recreational activities with long-term resource protection.
- Partner with the community in passive recreation decision-making and stewardship.
- Acquire the lands or interests to provide access to the city's open space lands and relieve the adverse effects of crowding upon resources and the visitor experience.

- **3.08 Public Access to Public Lands**
Public access to natural lands will be provided for, except where closure is necessary to protect areas from unacceptable degradation or impacts to agriculture, habitat or wildlife, for public safety or limits on access necessary to preserve the quality of the visitor experience.

- Improve the quality of visitor experiences and increase the sustainability of trails and trailheads while conserving resources.
- Balance and integrate the activities of nature and people in accordance with the Boulder City Charter.

PURPOSES, PLANS, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

WHO WILL VISIT IN THE FUTURE AND HOW CAN WE MANAGE THE SYSTEM INCLUSIVELY FOR ALL GROUPS?

Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan

Open Space Long-Range Management Policies

Systemwide Management or Geographic Area Plans

Related Plans and Ongoing Needs

Sustainability Framework:
Healthy and socially thriving community
Livable community
Accessible and connected community
Climate Commitment:
Clean Mobility

VISITOR MASTER PLAN

- Provide for aesthetic enjoyment and provide for a passive recreation experience.
- Provide and maintain highly functional and sustainable visitor facilities.
- Partner with the community in passive recreation decision-making and stewardship.

- **3.08 Public Access to Public Lands**
Certain lands provide a means for educating users on the importance of the natural environment. These public lands may include areas for recreation and preservation of agricultural use, unique natural features and wildlife and plant habitat.
- **8.05 Diversity**
City/County support inclusion of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural diversity into physical, social and economic environments.

Some Current Management Tactics

- Multimodal Transportation
- Area Designations
- Land Acquisition
- Education and Outreach
- Permit Programs
- Voice and Sight Program
- Trailhead Leash
- Parking Fees
- Seasonal Wildlife Closures
- Muddy Trail Closures
- Data

Park to Park

- **Chautauqua Access Management Plan**
  - **Parking capacity study**
- **Free shuttle**
- **Limited Paid Parking – no cash**
- **Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays**
- **10 min. ride**
- **Lyft rides discounted/free**
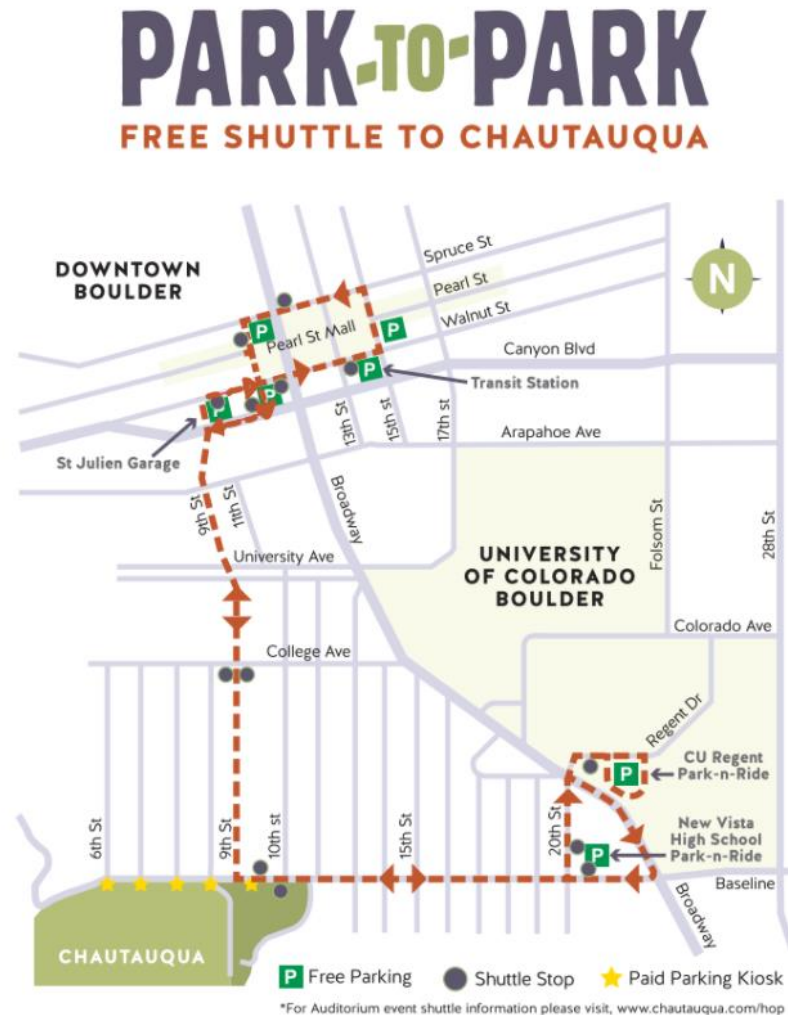
Area Designations

Open Space and Mountain Parks will use an area management system as a framework for implementing Visitor Master Plan implementation strategies. Key policies, programs, and projects are targeted to area-specific needs throughout the system.

- **Passive Recreation**
  - Provide a high level of public access to destinations and connection through designated trails. • Maintain or improve passive recreational and educational opportunities, while protecting and preserving natural lands and resources. • Accommodate high levels of visitor use with appropriate management, trails and trail heads, and services. • Reduce conflicts among visitor activities. • Minimize the number of undesignated or "social trails;" eliminate undesignated trails when they are duplicative or damaging to resources

- **Natural Area**
  - Accommodate low-impact visitor activities where adequate trails exist or can be built, and resource impacts can be minimized. • Provide opportunities for passive recreational and educational activities that require topographic relief or a natural setting (e.g., hang/paragliding, climbing/bouldering, nature study, scenic viewing). • Protect the quality of natural and agricultural resources (especially where high value resources exist). • Eliminate undesignated trails when they are redundant or damaging to resources.

- **Agricultural Area Designation**
  - Maintain the efficiency of agricultural production and operation. • Manage agricultural production and operation to ensure safety for operators and visitors in the vicinity. • Provide, where appropriate, public access and passive recreational opportunities that have minimal impacts on agricultural production and operation or other resources. • Manage visitor access in areas of intensive agricultural production or operation to ensure visitor safety. • Eliminate undesignated trails when they are redundant or damaging to resources.

- **Habitat Conservation Area**
  - Maintain the efficiency of agricultural production and operation. • Manage agricultural production and operation to ensure safety for operators and visitors in the vicinity. • Provide, where appropriate, public access and passive recreational opportunities that have minimal impacts on agricultural production and operation or other resources. • Manage visitor access in areas of intensive agricultural production or operation to ensure visitor safety. • Eliminate undesignated trails when they are redundant or damaging to resources.

Land Acquisition

Today, it is estimated that about 5,000 acres remain to be acquired to fulfill a vision of a comprehensive open space system.

DECADE	NUMBER OF ACQUISITIONS	ACRES ACQUIRED OR PROTECTED
1967 - 1977	68	8,312
1978 - 1987	112	7,554
1988 - 1997	112	9,167
1998 - 2007	100	12,107
2008 - 2017	18	1,850

Pre-1967
In 1967, Boulder voters made history by approving a 0.40 percent sales tax specifically to buy and care for natural lands.
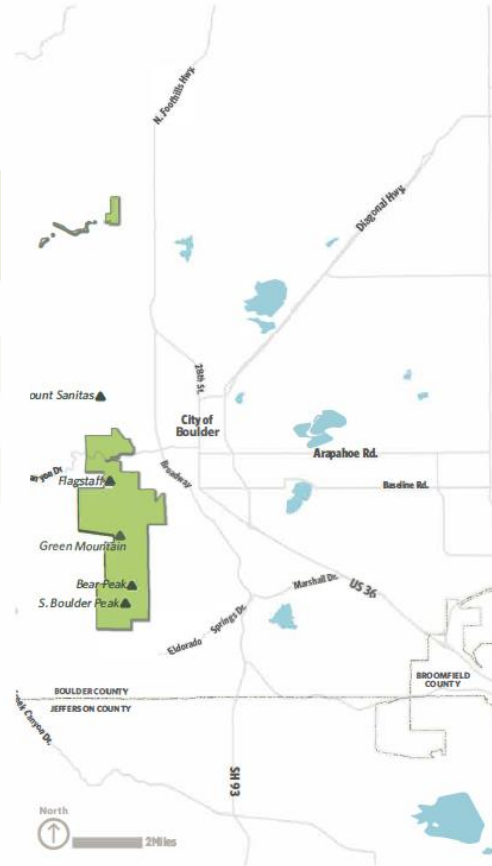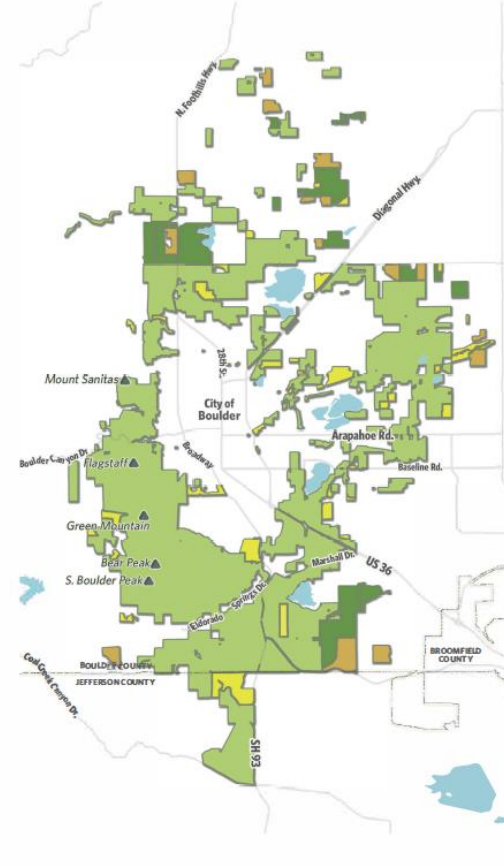
1967-1992
25 years of acquisitions after 1967 tax approval.
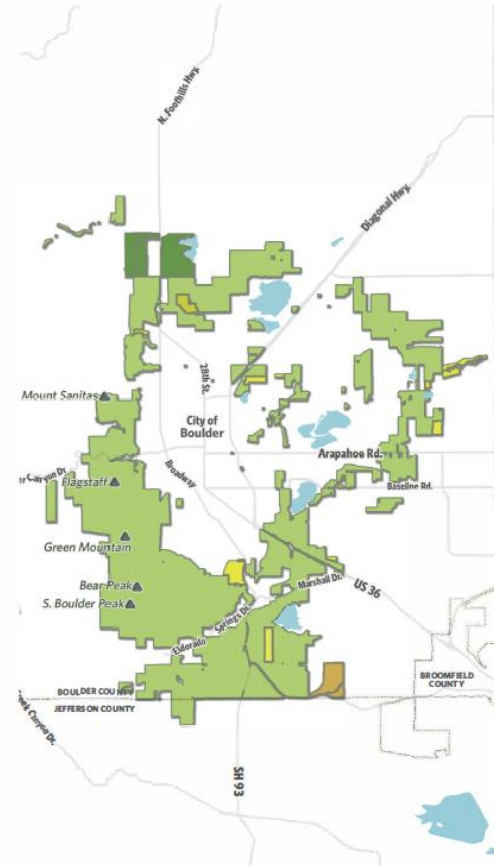
1992-2017
50 years of acquisitions after 1967 tax approval.

Data

- **Human Dimensions Program**

- **Trail Counters**

- **Vehicle Counters**

- **Observational Studies**

- **Live Data**

- **Photo Monitoring**

- **Visitor Survey**

- **Resident Survey**

Current Management Tactics

The Pandemic:

- New & unfamiliar landscape due to COVID-19
- Adaptive management needs outside of long-term planning due to emergency response
- Opportunity to try tactics on short-term basis to address emerging scenarios
- Review of actions to determine if they should continue, are out of policy, or should be discontinued

Adaptive Management

- 300 concepts and ideas reviewed
- 51 actions temporarily implemented on-the-ground
  - Suggested directional loops
  - Bulletin boards
  - Parking area closures
  - Increased educational staff outreach – outdoor stations
  - Additional marketing of trail characteristics and use patterns
  - Coordinated messaging with other agencies
  - Partnering on parking studies
  - Increased servicing of facilities
  - Additional visitor monitoring studies
  - System-wide dogs on leash recommendation
  - Gathering area closures
  - Area closures for Public Safety– Boulder Star
- Review need for public process and plan support for continued implementation

Managing Perception
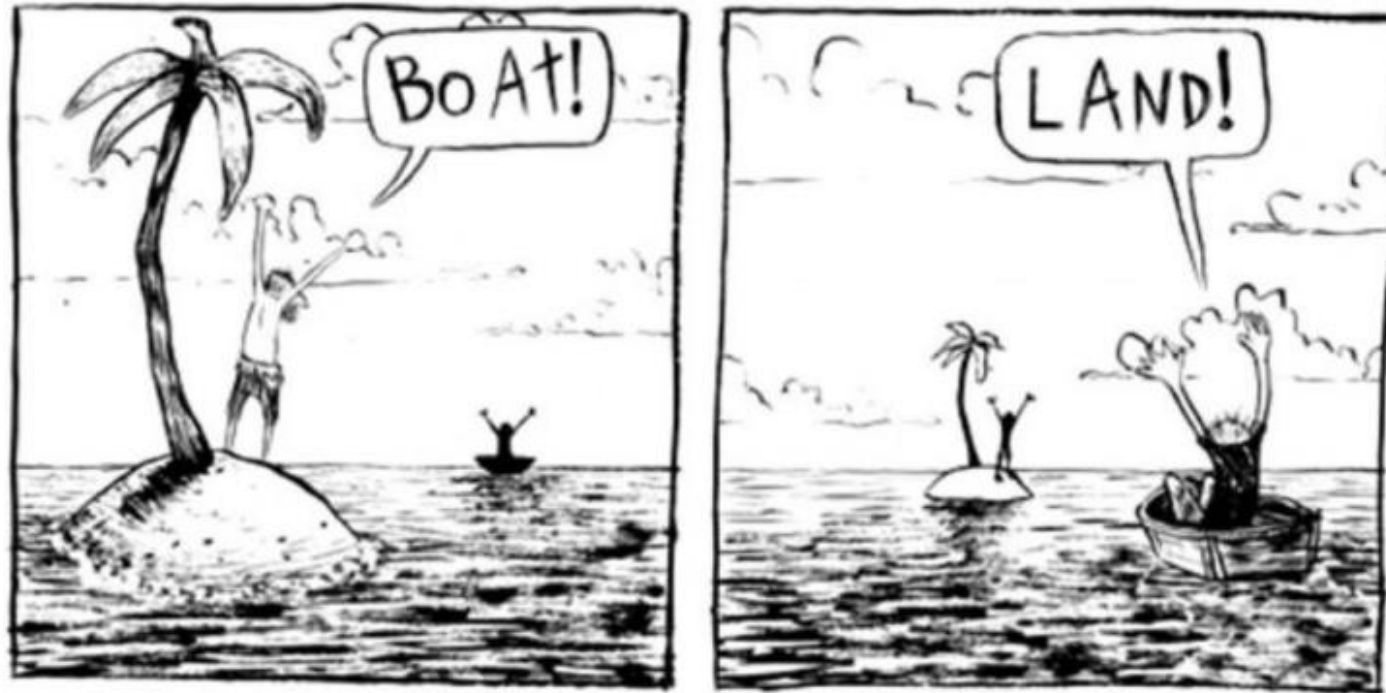
Managing Perception

RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CROWDING ON OR NEAR TRAILS

	A large problem	A small problem	Not at all a problem	Don't know
CHAUTAUQUA	59%	29%	6%	6%
SANITAS	32%	35%	11%	22%
GREGORY CANYON	11%	22%	21%	46%
DOUDY DRAW/SOUTH MESA	8%	23%	25%	44%
WONDERLAND LAKE	4%	18%	30%	48%
MARSHALL MESA	4%	23%	19%	54%
FLATIRONS VISTA	4%	15%	22%	60%
BOBOLINK	3%	17%	22%	58%
BOULDER VALLEY RANCH	%	10%	29%	61%

■ A large problem ■ A small problem ■ Not at all a problem ■ Don't know

Managing Perception
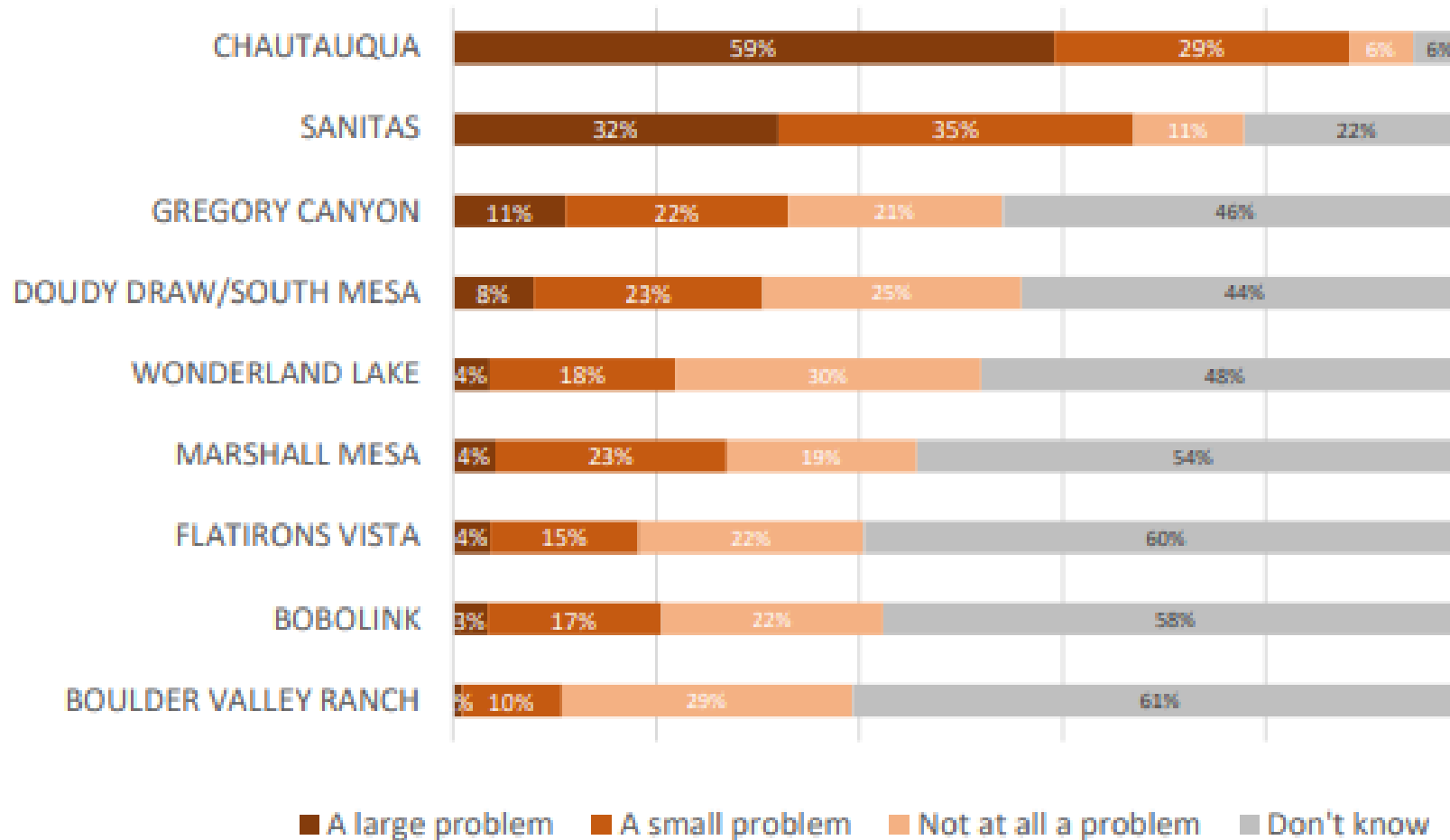
Perception

We're being overrun by out-of-towners and they are all bringing their dogs

Biking is off the charts

Parking is a struggle

Everyone has a dog and they are everywhere

Visitor conflict is off-the-charts

The youngin's are taking over

Reality

82% of visitors come from within Boulder County and 91% of dog visits come from county residents

Biking has ranged between 9 & 11%

Only 6% report finding a parking space difficult

About 1 in 3 visitor parties brought one or more dogs with them

Conflict has remained stable between 5 & 7%

Visitor's on average are getting older (similar to county demographic). College age is decreasing proportionally.

Managing Perception

Perception

➢ Visitation is growing "exponentially"

➢ Nighttime visitation is exploding

➢ Visitation has increased everywhere

➢ It's busy all the time everywhere

Reality

➢ Visitation has grown by 34% (~2.4% annual growth rate)

➢ Nighttime use has gone down both in percent and total visits

➢ Changes in visitation are not equally distributed across the system

➢ Overall temporal patterns have remained relatively stable

   ➢ The majority of access points receive low to medium levels of visitation

Managing Perception

2015

2019

Annual Average Daily Visits - 2016/2017 vs. 2020

	Sage - south at Boulder Valley Ranch TH	Chautauqua at Chautauqua TH	Coal Seam at Marshall Mesa TH	Dakota Ridge at Dakota Ridge AP	Doudy Draw at Doudy Draw TH	Eagle at Eagle TH	Flatirons Vista at Flatirons Vista TH	Foothills South at Four Mile Creek TH	Sanitas Valley at Centennial TH	South Boulder Creek at Bobolink TH	Mesa at South Mesa TH
2016/2017	121	956	273	183	65	118	88	190	364	283	333
2020	223	962	296	175	126	183	197	305	399	292	305

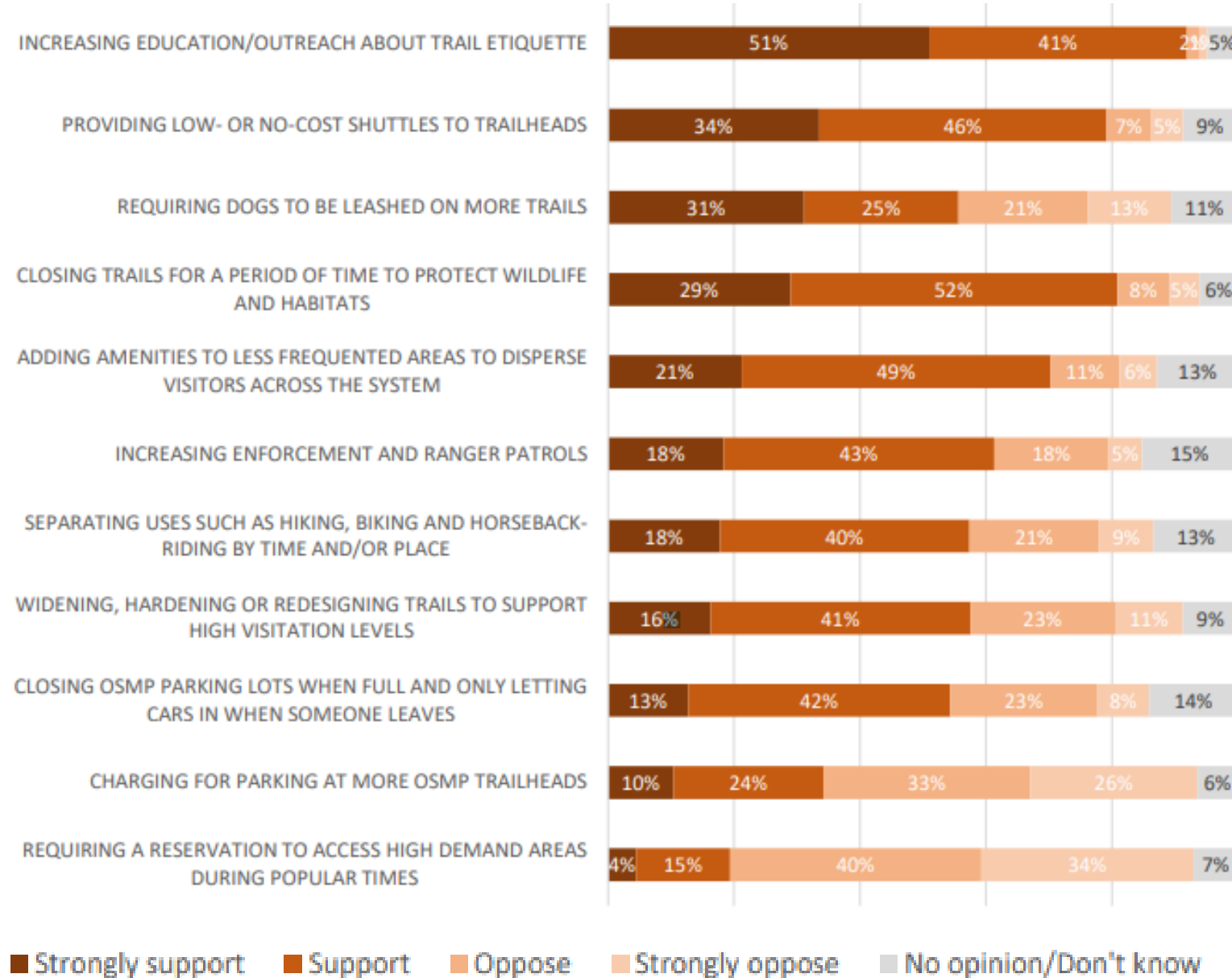Data labels indicate % change relative to 2016/2017 average daily visits

Data

- **Gain public acceptance for management tactics**

- **Understand public interests and concerns**

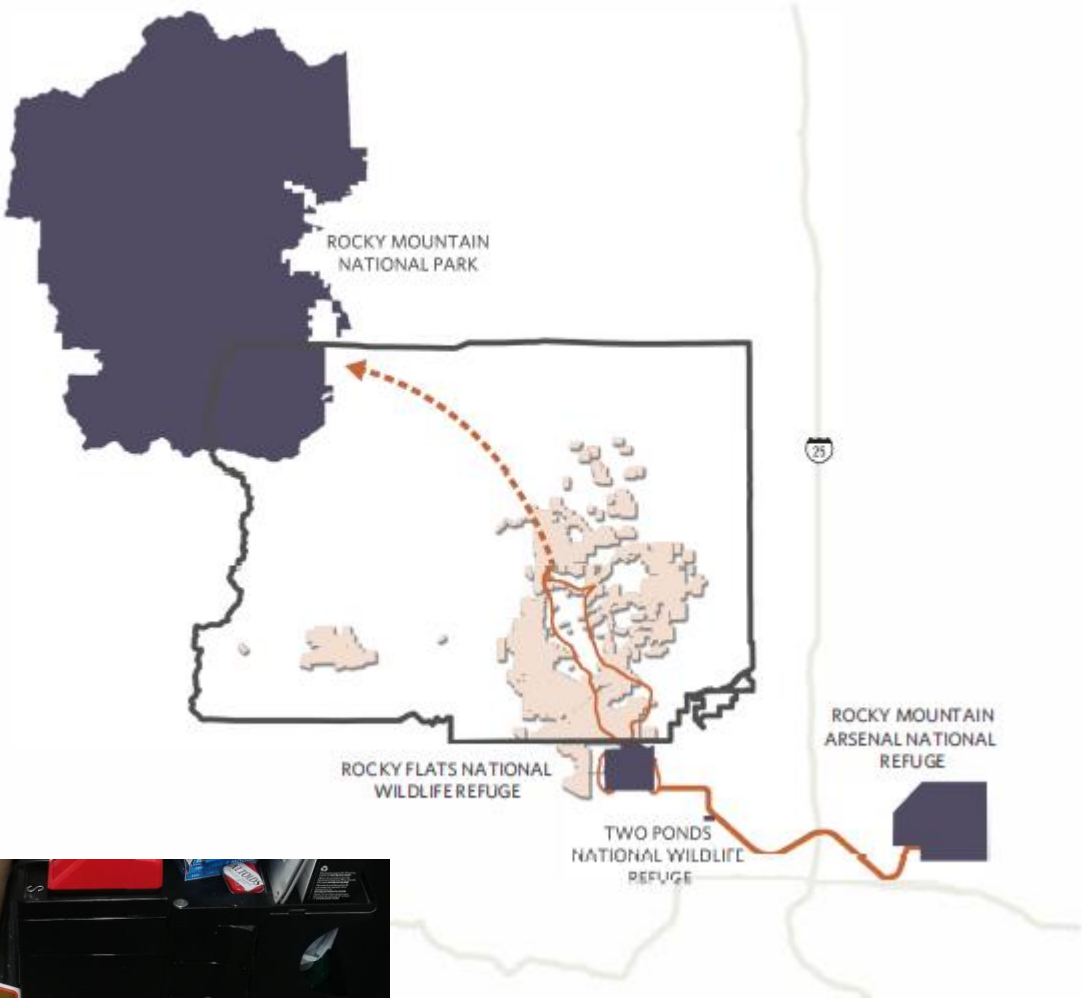- **Engage broader community perspective**

- **Track trends over time**

Figure 24: Acceptability of Management Actions to Protect Plants and Wildlife

Different management actions have been suggested to protect plants and wildlife. How acceptable or unacceptable are each of the following management actions?

Legend: ■ Completely Acceptable ■ Somewhat Acceptable ■ Neutral

Management Action	Completely Acceptable	Somewhat Acceptable	Neutral	Total
Increasing education and outreach	70%	17%	11%	98%
Closing trails when muddy or susceptible to damage	58%	29%	7%	94%
Closing areas seasonally to protect wildlife	59%	26%	9%	94%
Requiring visitors to stay on designated trails	56%	26%	8%	90%
Enforcing existing regulations more vigorously	48%	24%	18%	90%
Permanently closing and restoring undesignated trails	47%	25%	11%	83%
Additional visitor regulations	15%	22%	33%	70%
Limiting the number of people allowed in an area or on a trail at any one time	15%	30%	15%	60%
Developing a permit or reservation system for peak use times and areas	7%	17%	12%	36%
Charging fees to access open space at peak times	7%	10%	9%	26%

Open Space and Mountain Parks 2016 Resident Survey: Report of Results

Data

RESIDENTS' SUPPORT OR OPPOSITION TO POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN HIGH-USE AREAS

Management Approach	Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion/Don't know
INCREASING EDUCATION/OUTREACH ABOUT TRAIL ETIQUETTE	51%	41%	2%	1%	5%
PROVIDING LOW- OR NO-COST SHUTTLES TO TRAILHEADS	34%	46%	7%	5%	9%
REQUIRING DOGS TO BE LEASHED ON MORE TRAILS	31%	25%	21%	13%	11%
CLOSING TRAILS FOR A PERIOD OF TIME TO PROTECT WILDLIFE AND HABITATS	29%	52%	8%	5%	6%
ADDING AMENITIES TO LESS FREQUENTED AREAS TO DISPERSE VISITORS ACROSS THE SYSTEM	21%	49%	11%	6%	13%
INCREASING ENFORCEMENT AND RANGER PATROLS	18%	43%	18%	5%	15%
SEPARATING USES SUCH AS HIKING, BIKING AND HORSEBACK-RIDING BY TIME AND/OR PLACE	18%	40%	21%	9%	13%
WIDENING, HARDENING OR REDESIGNING TRAILS TO SUPPORT HIGH VISITATION LEVELS	16%	41%	23%	11%	9%
CLOSING OSMP PARKING LOTS WHEN FULL AND ONLY LETTING CARS IN WHEN SOMEONE LEAVES	13%	42%	23%	8%	14%
CHARGING FOR PARKING AT MORE OSMP TRAILHEADS	10%	24%	33%	26%	6%
REQUIRING A RESERVATION TO ACCESS HIGH DEMAND AREAS DURING POPULAR TIMES	4%	15%	40%	34%	7%

■ Strongly support ■ Support ■ Oppose ■ Strongly oppose ■ No opinion/Don't know

(2019 OSMP Master Plan Survey)

Partnerships

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL NATIONAL REFUGE

ROCKY FLATS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

TWO PONDS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

WYOMING

FT COLLINS

GREELEY

BOULDER

DENVER

COLORADO SPRINGS

PUEBLO

LEGEND
Proposed
Planned
Existing

NEW MEXICO

AREA CLOSED NO TRESPASSING

Thanks

DNR Divisions

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
- Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety
- Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Division of Water Resources
- Colorado State Land Board
- *Colorado Avalanche Information Center*
- *Division of Forestry (Colorado State Forest Service)*

Colorado Department of Natural Resources Budget

Division	FTE
Executive Director's Office (EDO)	41.3
CO Avalanche Information Center (CAIC)	11.3
Division of Reclamation and Mining (DRMS)	65.8
Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (OGCC)	147.3
State Land Board (SLB)	42
CO Parks and Wildlife (CPW)	894.5
CO Water Conservation Board (CWCB)	46.7
Division of Water Resources (DWR)	254
Total	1,502.9

Total Appropriation By Division
($ shown are in rounded millions)

$38 CWCB
$24 DWR
$21 OGCC
$73 , EDO*
$167 CPW
Other
$5 SLB
$1 CAIC
$8 DRMS
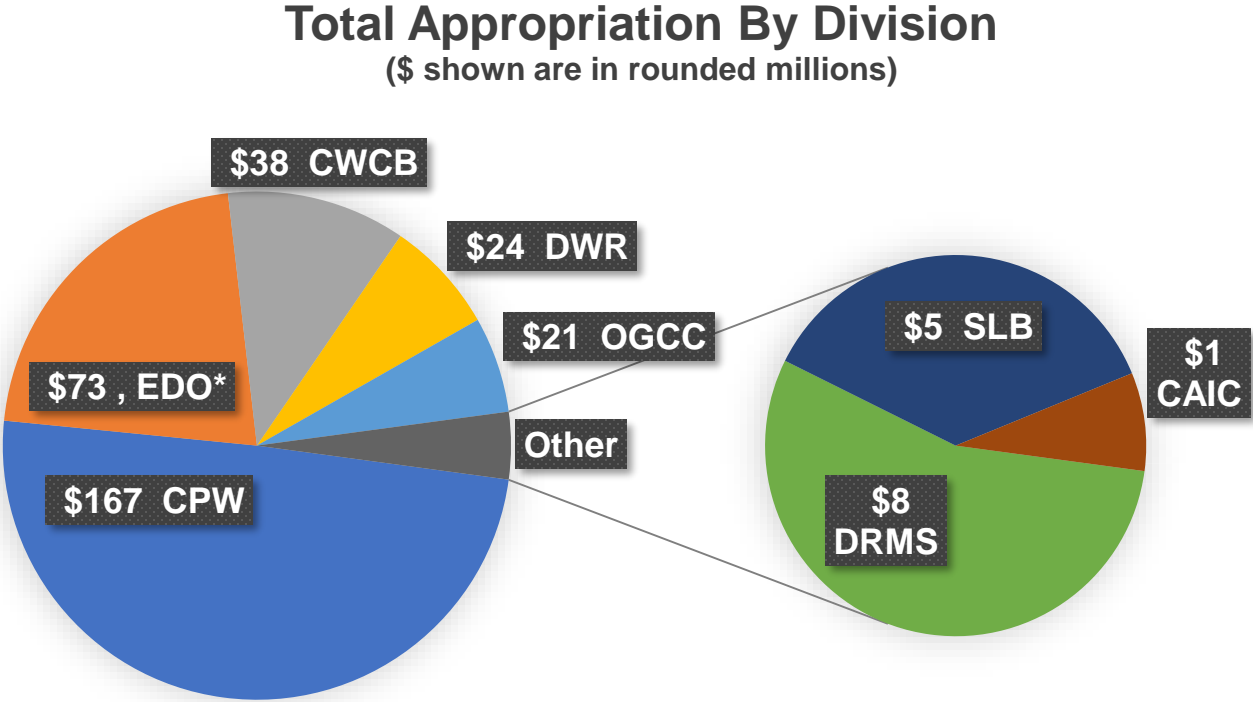
*The Executive Director's budget includes funding for administrative personal services and operating expenses, department-wide common policies, and annual Species Conservation Trust Fund projects.

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DNR

Colorado State Parks (42 parks / 240,000 acres)
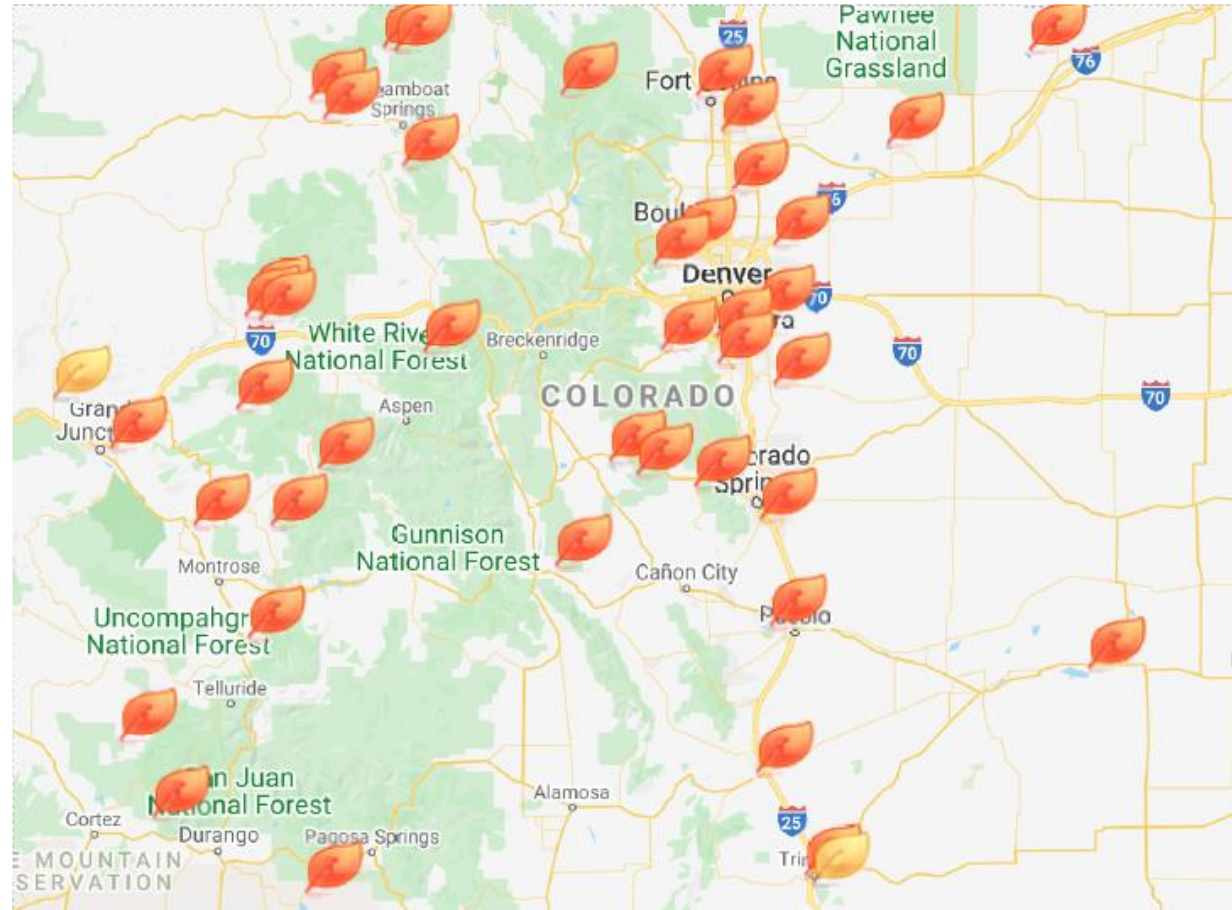
State Wildlife Areas (350 SWAs / 684,000 acres)
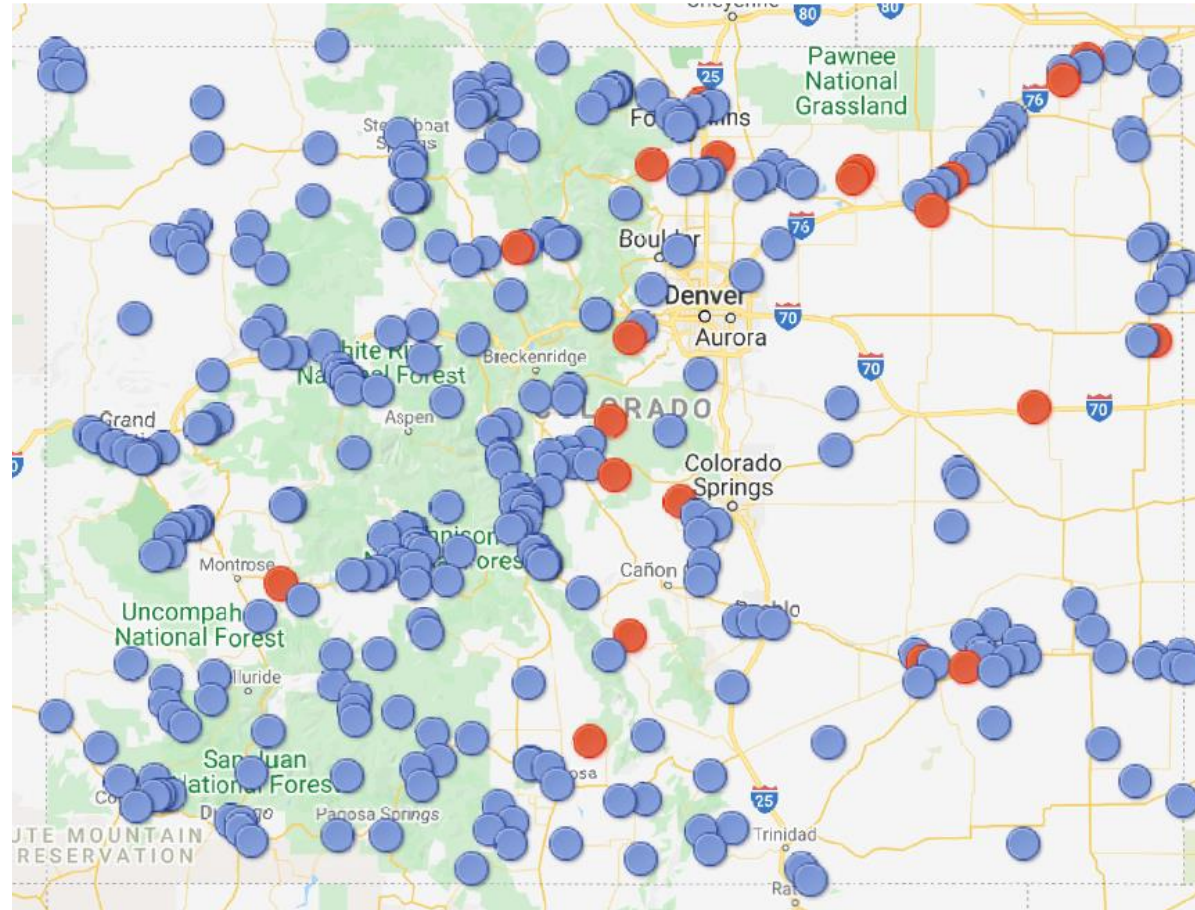
STL Public Access Program (Soon 1M+ Acres)
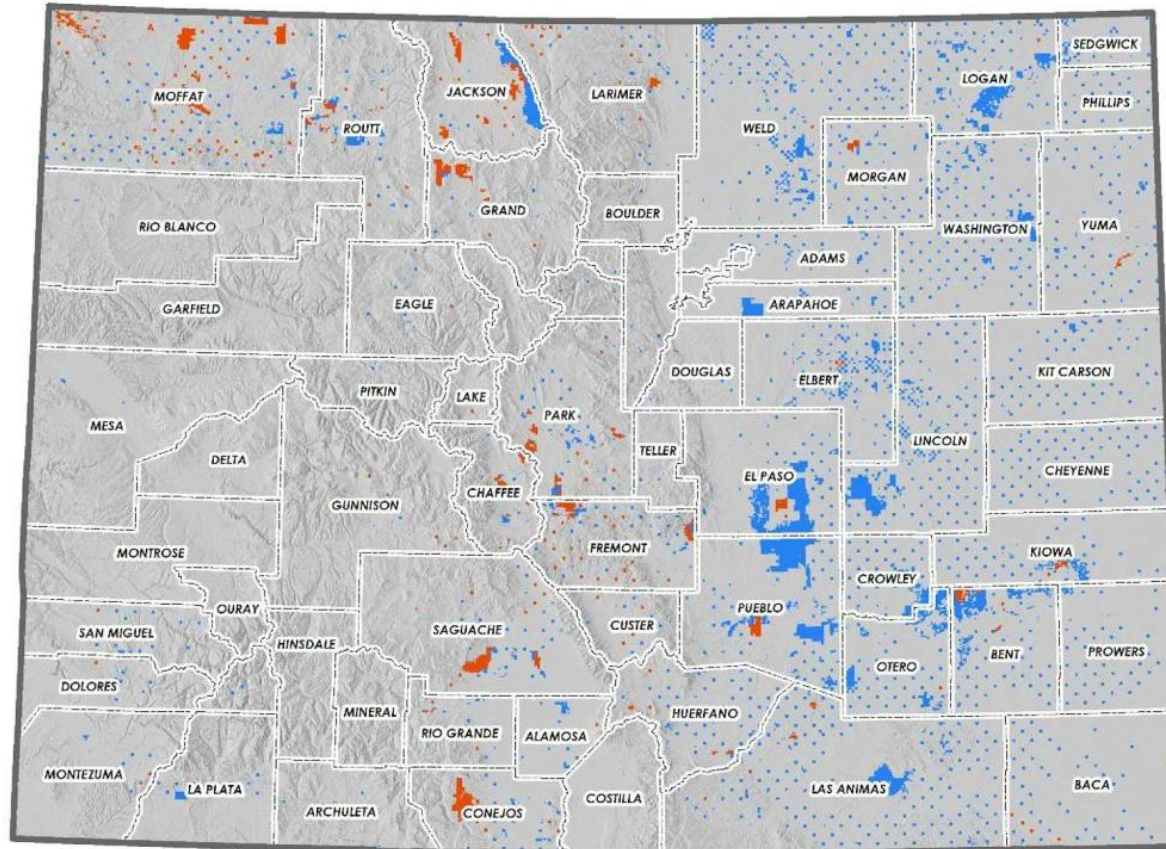
PUBLIC ACCESS PROGRAM | ENROLLED | NOT ENROLLED

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CPW Visitation Challenges

- Park visitation increased more than 2.2 million visitor days from FY15 through FY19.

- Eldo Canyon SP: 244K visitors in 2016 to 524K in 2018.

- 2020 increase in park visitation between 30-50% due to COVID

- Increased visitation on wildlife properties (SWA, PAP, Walk-in)

COVID19 Response and Visitation Management Tools

- State Parks / SWAs remained open

- Hunting opportunities remained available in most circumstances

- Some campgrounds, beaches and other high-use areas closed briefly

- Social distancing & masks enforced

- High-touch facilities roped off, etc.

- Weekly meetings with fed partners and constant contact with counties

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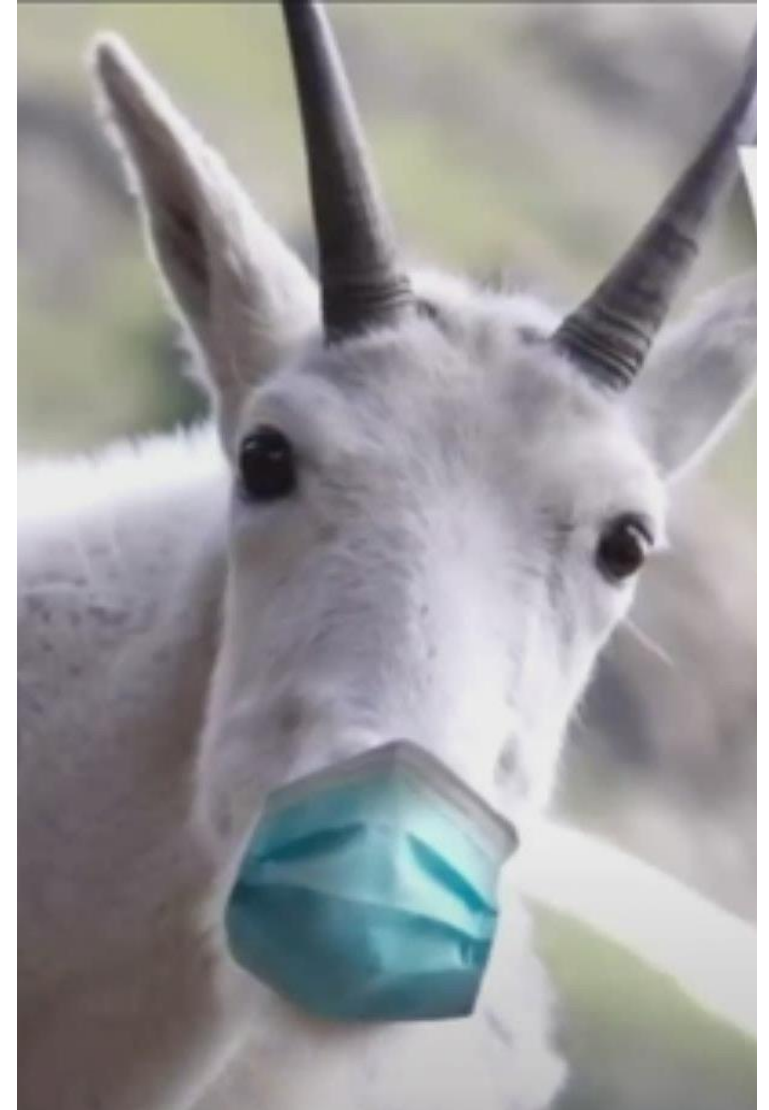
What Now? Managing Visitation

- Eldorado Canyon Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP)

- Consideration of reservation systems, shuttles, new passes, etc.

- Keep Colorado Wild Pass

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What Now?
Increasing Capacity (Mostly)

- Fishers Peak State Park Partnership

- Future State Park Nominations Process

- SB20-003 and SB21-112 - Infrastructure Investments

- CPW/State Land Board Public Access Program Expansion

- New State Wildlife Area Fees / Passes

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What Now?
Partnerships & Planning

- Colorado Regional Outdoor Partnerships Executive Order

- Shared Stewardship (USFS)

- Engaging in federal planning efforts (BLM RMPs)

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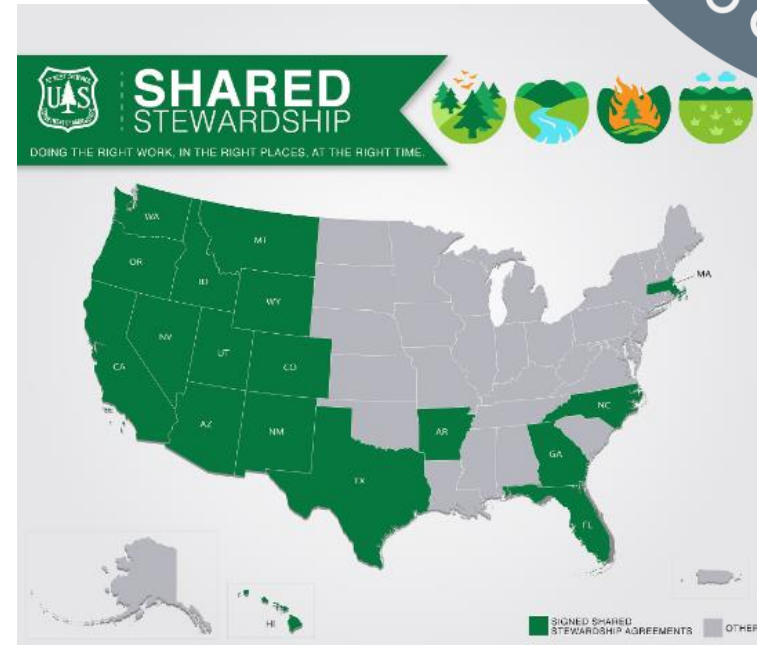
Contact Information

- Email: douglas.vilsack@state.co.us

- Phone: 720-456-8956

- Website: https://dnr.colorado.gov/

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Questions?

National Parks Conservation Association

National Park Visitation

March 19, 2021

thetrekplanner.com

National Park visitation trending up nationwide

The trend is most acute at our most popular parks where they are facing real challenges from overcrowding and congestion

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

100 YEARS

Annual Recreation Visits

Rocky Mountain NP ——— Zion NP

Sophie Wills, The Spectrum
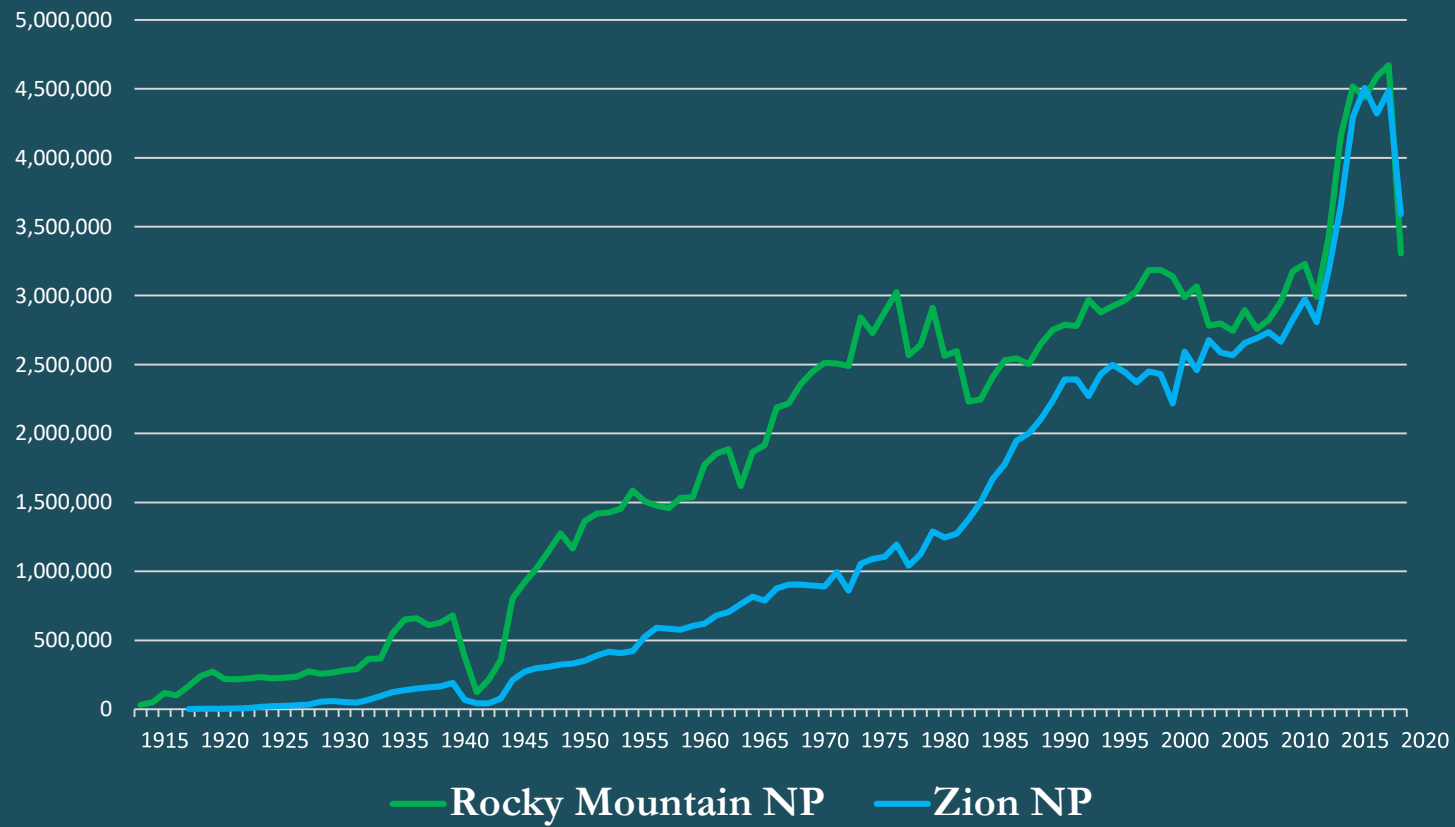
Sporadic, episodic and concentrated travel to parks during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated visitation trends

Superintendents are bracing for yet another year of exploding visitation

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

100 YEARS

Zion National Park Monthly Recreation Visits

K. Sophie Will, The Spectrum
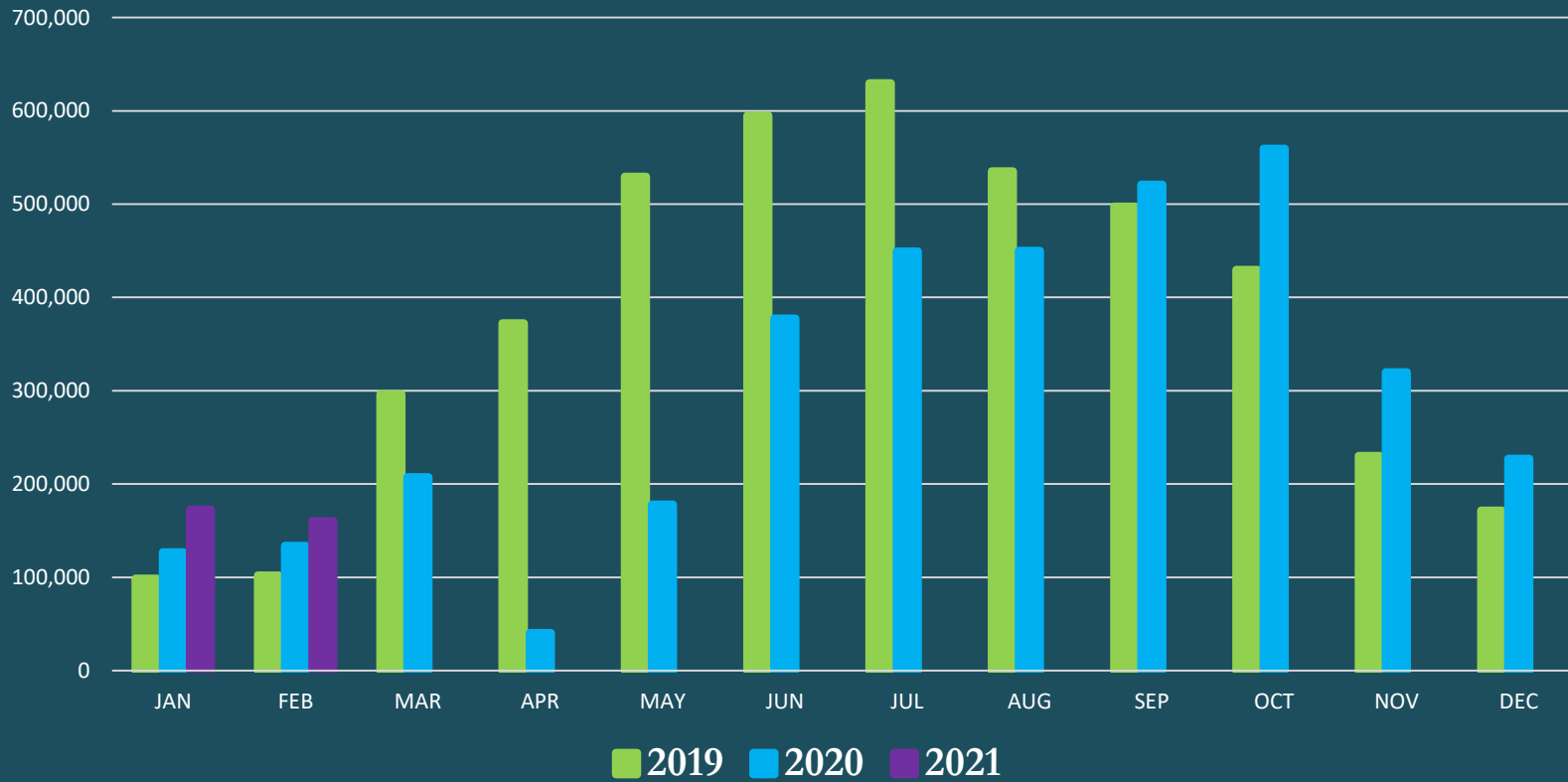
Impacts in parks

Diminish visitor experience

Traffic gridlock, long lines for basic services, loss of quiet and solitude

Public Health and safety

Crowding on precipitous terrain, human waste

Natural and cultural resource degradation

Social trailing, wildlife displacement, soil erosion and plant loss, litter, graffiti

Park staff and infrastructure

Staff capacity, increase in search and rescue, wear and tear on trails, roads, buildings, historical structures

NPS via abc4.com

Impacts in neighboring public lands

Overflow visitation

Dispersed camping

Often fewer resources and staff

Visitor safety

thedyrt.com

NATIONAL
PARKS
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION

100 YEARS

Impacts in neighboring communities

Visitor Experience
Traffic gridlock, long lines for basic services, parking

Quality of life

Affordable housing

Community character

Grand Lake, CO – Julie Falk

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
100 YEARS

There is often broad agreement on the problems associated with crowding and congestion

The challenge is agreeing on the solutions

NATIONAL
PARKS
CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION

100 YEARS

Messaging and Communications

Managing visitors' expectations and encouraging pre-visit planning via extensive outreach before and during a park visit

Infrastructure and Facilities

Managing visitor movement or behavior by expanding or adjusting hardened facilities

Transportation

Managing how visitors get into and move around a park by allowing or requiring bus or shuttle ridership, foot/bicycle traffic, etc.

Permits and Reservations

Managing the number of visitors entering a park or part of a park at a given point (time of day, day of the week/month, time of year) via pre-arranged reservations

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

100 YEARS
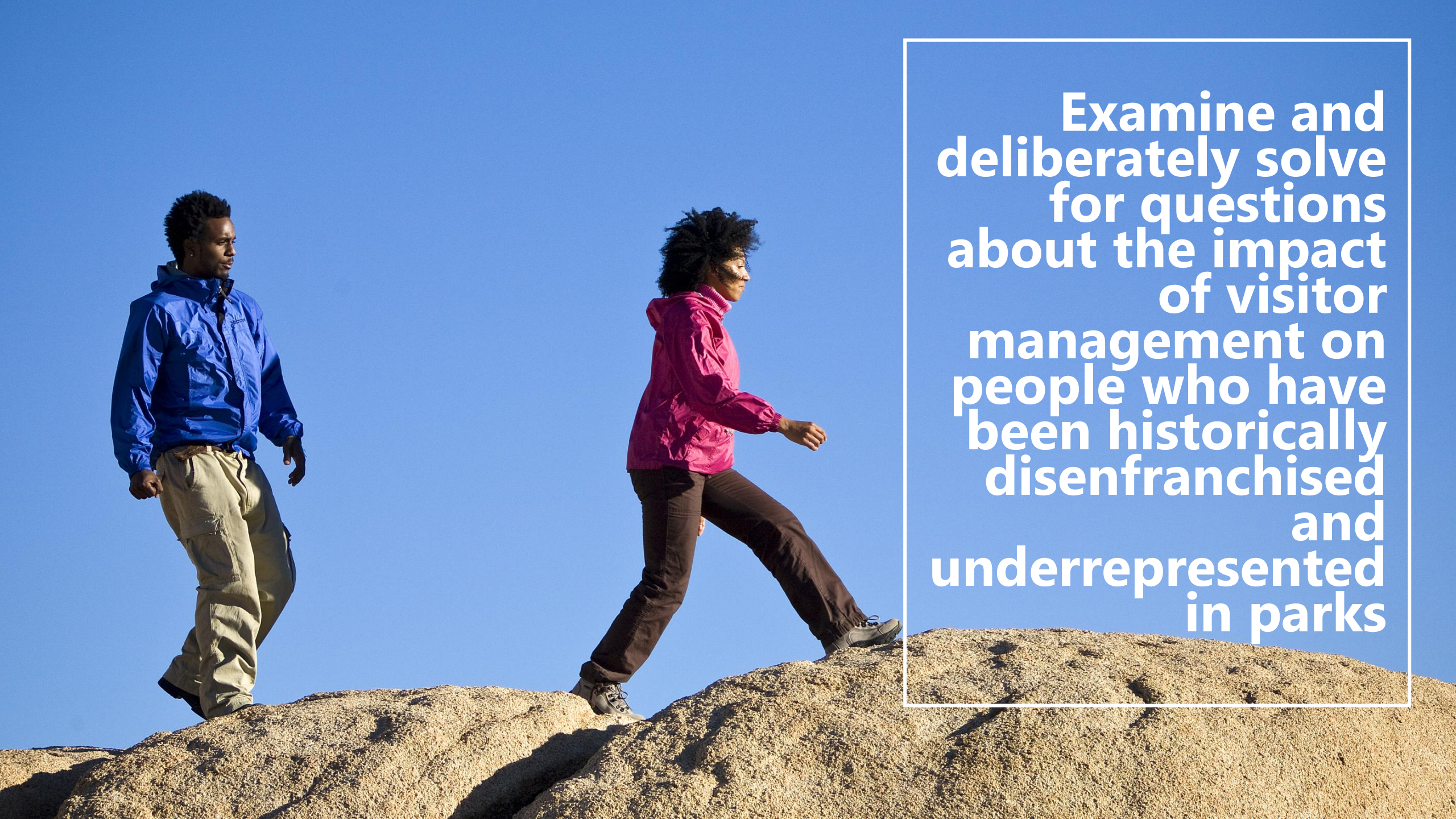
Any visitor use management solution will have ripple effects outside that destination on neighboring public lands and gateway communities

Come Back in 3 Hours

ROAD CLOSED

PARK FULL

K. Sophie Will, The Spectrum

The Salt Lake Tribune

Examine and deliberately solve for questions about the impact of visitor management on people who have been historically disenfranchised and underrepresented in parks

Thank you

cmacnulty@npca.org

Rocky Mountain

Zion - Jock Whitworth

Legal Obligations for Visitor Use Management

"

Proactively planning for visitor use maximizes the ability of agencies to encourage access and protect resources and values.

-Interagency Visitor Use Management Council

National Park Service

Forest Service

Bureau of Land Management

National Park Service

- Statutes
  - Organic Act
  - General Authorities Act and 1978 Amendment
  - National Parks and Recreation Act
- NPS Management Policies 2006
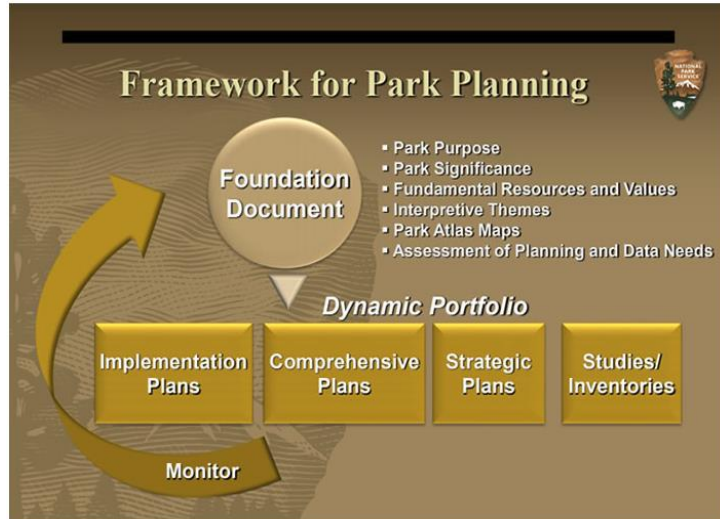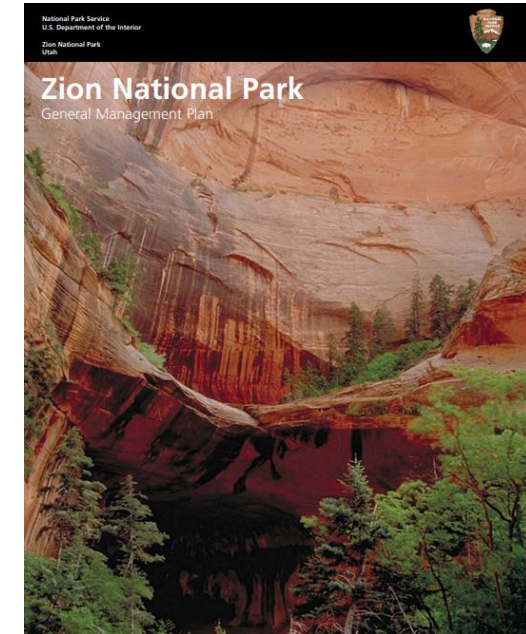
Forest Service

- Statute
  - National Forest Management Act
- Forest Service planning regulations
  - 36 CFR 219.5, 219.6

BLM

- Statute
  - Federal Land Policy and Management Act
- BLM Manual

Interagency Visitor Use Management Council

Council Mission & Purpose

Council Mission

- The council's mission is to provide guidance on visitor use management policies and to develop legally defensible and effective interagency implementation tools for visitor use management.

Council Vision

- Providing a unified voice for excellence in visitor use management on our nation's federally-managed lands and waters to sustain resources and quality visitor experiences.

Council Purpose

- Develop interagency guidance for effective visitor use management programs that are efficient and legally defensible.
- Identify strategies for improving institutional capabilities and professional competencies, including partnerships.
- Develop shared tools and training, including a unified visitor use planning framework, and monitor their effectiveness.
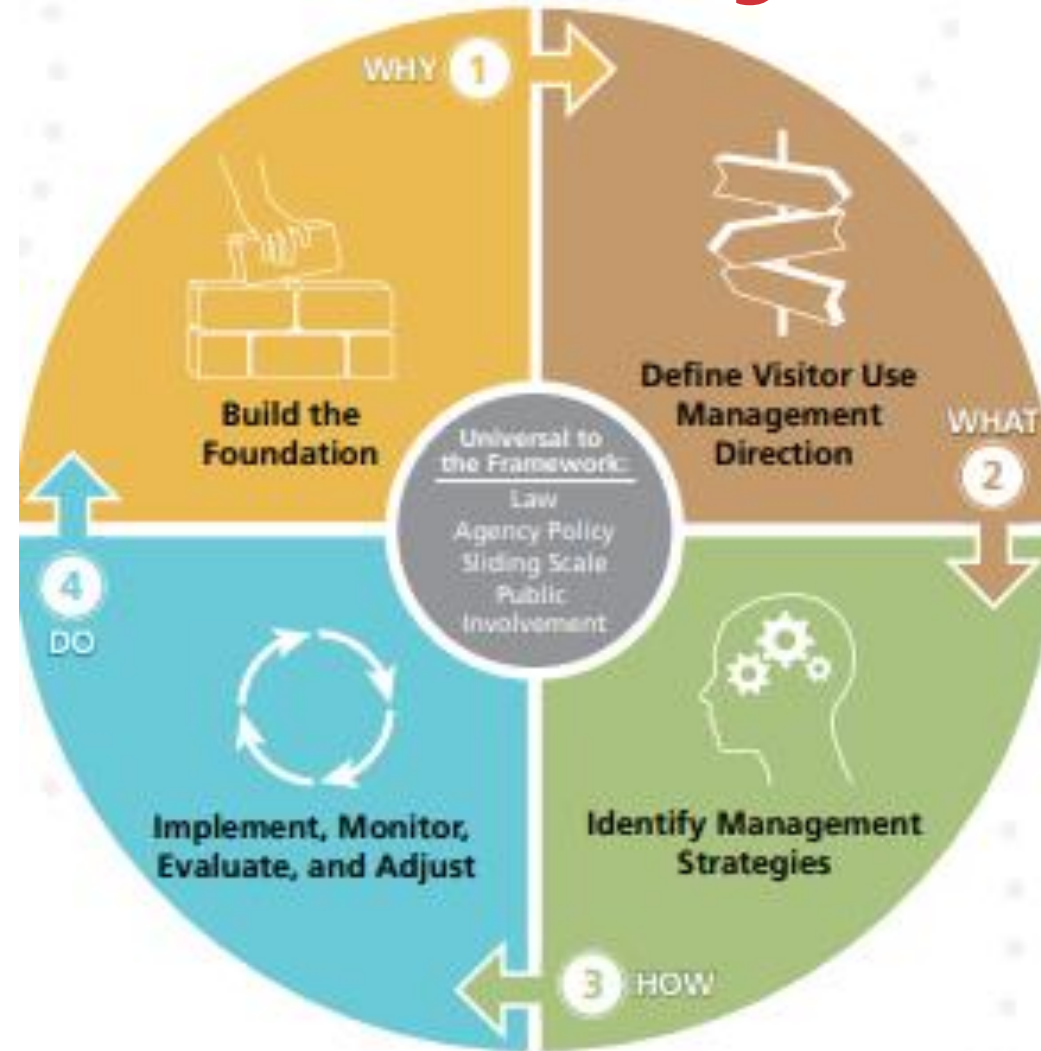- Improve internal and external communication strategies.

Work of the Council

- Communication & Outreach
- Guidance for policy and positions that inform Council products and activities
  - Visitor Use Management
  - Visitor Capacity
- Visitor Use Management Framework
  - Planning process, can be incorporated into existing agency planning and decision-making processes
- How-to guidebooks
  - Monitoring guidebook
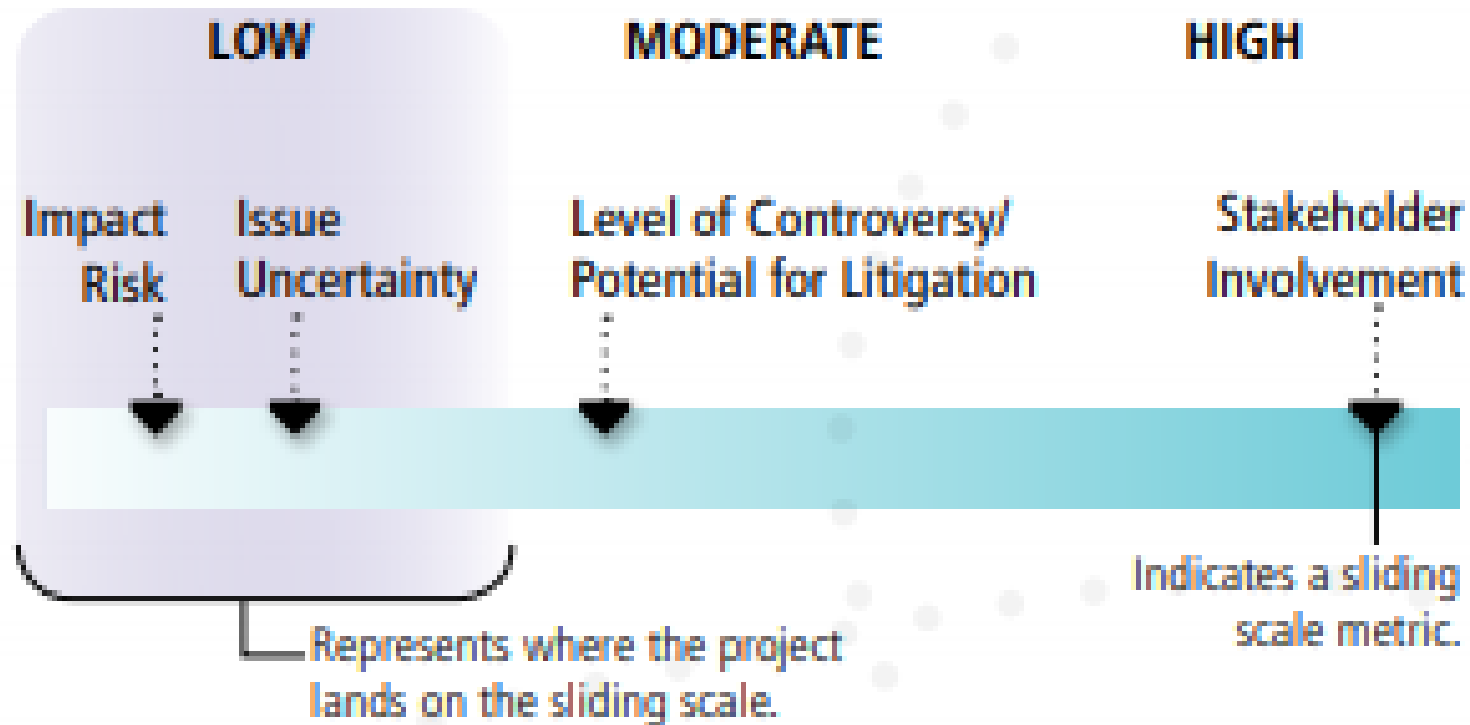 - Visitor capacity guidebook
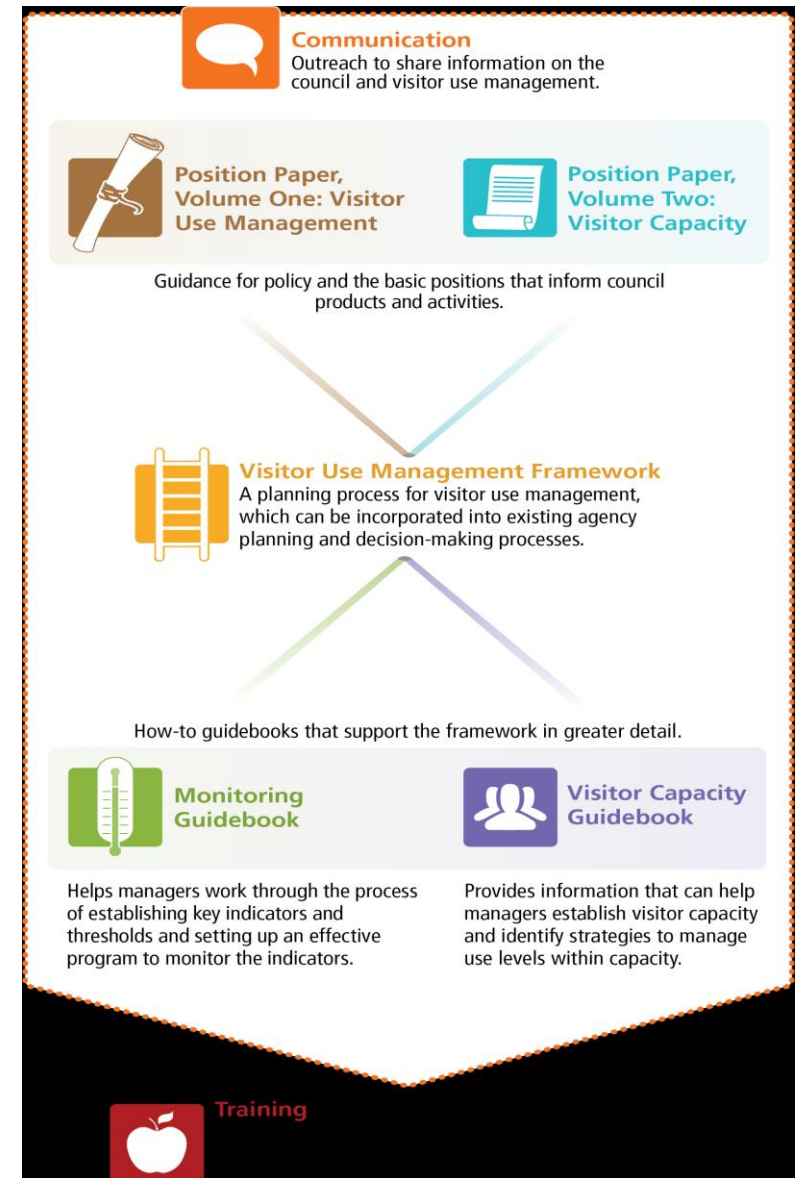
Overview of the Visitor Use Management Framework

Sliding Scale Approach

Representation of the four criteria involved in the sliding scale of analysis.

LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
Impact Risk	Level of Controversy/ Potential for Litigation	Stakeholder Involvement
Issue Uncertainty		

Represents where the project lands on the sliding scale.

Indicates a sliding scale metric.

Relationship to Larger Agency Planning Processes

Table 6. Large-scale plans required for federal land- and water-managing agencies

AGENCY	LARGE-SCALE PLANS
Bureau of Land Management	Resource Management Plan
National Park Service	General Management Plan
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Comprehensive Conservation Plan
U.S. Forest Service	Land Management Plan
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	National Marine Sanctuary Management Plan
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Engineer Regulation 1130-2-550, Master Plan 1165-2-400

Council Guidebooks

Thank You

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303.825.7000

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