

PUBLIC
REVIEW
DRAFT

Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan

October 2025

Prepared by RPI Consulting, Durango



MONTELORES COALITION

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1) Executive Summary

This plan was developed with grant funding and assistance from Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Colorado Parks and Wildlife established the Regional Partnership Initiative and selected the Montelores Coalition to participate in the program along with the other regional partnerships covering the majority of the state. Colorado’s Outdoors Strategy says that Regional Partnership Initiatives “bring together broad interests to advance conservation and outdoor recreation priorities” and provide opportunities “to learn from and elevate community-level perspectives, values and priorities to inform planning and projects”.

The Montelores Coalition Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan is a result of a significant effort toward capturing the broad interests and community perspectives in Montezuma County and Dolores County. The goals and strategies in this plan came from people who live and work in Montezuma County and Dolores County. Although this plan is for the region, the Montelores Coalition plan topics align well with Colorado’s Outdoor Strategy ‘North Star’ Goals for the entire state.

FIGURE 1 – ALIGNMENT BETWEEN MONTELORES PLAN TOPICS AND STATE’S NORTH STAR GOALS

Plan Topics	North Star Goals – Colorado’s Outdoor Strategy		
	Exceptional and sustainable outdoor recreation	Climate-resilient conservation & restoration	Coordinated planning & funding
Topic 1 – Exceptional Outdoor Recreation Experiences	✓		✓
Topic 2 – Equitable Access to Outdoor Recreation	✓		✓
Topic 3 – Conservation of Natural and Heritage Resources	✓	✓	✓
Topic 4 – Capacity, Workforce and Funding for Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Management and Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
Topic 5 – Outdoor Recreation Business Growth and Development	✓		✓

At the outset of developing this plan, the Montelores Coalition Roundtable realized this was a rare opportunity to be proactive in establishing a strategic plan for both outdoor recreation and conservation. Montezuma County and Dolores County see impacts from one million plus outdoor recreation uses on public lands annually in both counties combined. However, trails and other outdoor recreation destinations in the region are not crowded compared to the urban areas in the state. Montezuma County and Dolores County are uniquely positioned to balance conservation and outdoor recreation into the future. The current level of use occurring in Montezuma County and Dolores County allows for fewer restrictions, fewer encounters with other users and more options. For example, the diversity of dispersed camping options in the region is increasingly rare throughout the West.

The Montelores Coalition Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan is an opportunity to maintain the multitude of outdoor recreation options that are available in this region that in other areas have become restricted as increased use put pressure on resources. Conservation and stewardship are essential for this undertaking. All indicators point toward steadily increasing outdoor recreational use in Montezuma County and Dolores County. The challenge for communities in the region is to manage the resources proactively using conservation best practices while finding ways to continue to provide outdoor recreation to a growing base of locals and tourists.

In Montezuma County and Dolores County, agriculture, wildlife conservation, and outdoor recreation are interrelated. Some livestock operations depend on federal lands for grazing, while many wildlife species depend on habitat located on private ranchlands. Outdoor recreation and livestock grazing often occur at the same times and places on some federal lands which can make managing livestock grazing operations more difficult. Likewise, livestock can have a negative impact on outdoor recreation and on natural resources. Another aspect of the interrelationship is that some agricultural properties have property boundaries along federal lands. As stated in the guiding principles: "Agriculture can be positively or negatively impacted by conservation and outdoor recreation efforts."

The Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan goals and strategies outline a path toward keeping outdoor recreation opportunities that are available today and having the ability to adapt to growing demand and changing preferences (Topic 1 – Exceptional Outdoor Recreation Experiences). As an extension of the goal of sustaining exceptional outdoor recreation experiences in Dolores County and Montezuma County, the plan offers strategic guidance on expanding the accessibility of outdoor recreation in the region (Topic 2 – Equitable Access to Outdoor Recreation).

The core of this plan is to provide direction for the maintenance of high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities while balancing conservation of natural and heritage resources, working lands, and wildlife populations. This includes identifying impacts from outdoor recreation occurring today and anticipating future impacts in order to reduce unwanted impacts and to improve outcomes for natural resources, wildlife, heritage resources and outdoor recreation infrastructure. Additionally, this plan identifies opportunities for

conservation of natural and heritage resources and working lands that are not directly related to outdoor recreation (Topic 3 – Conservation of Natural and Heritage Resources).

Maintaining outdoor recreation infrastructure and restoring damaged natural resources will require a stable workforce and funding (Topic 4 – Capacity, Workforce and Funding for Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Management and Infrastructure).

The financial sustainability of outdoor recreation hinges on how well outdoor recreation and heritage tourism drive sales and expand livelihoods in the region (Topic 5 – Outdoor Recreation Business Growth and Development). Tourism has long been part of the regional economic base and has been an important revenue generator for local businesses, local governments and public service providers. There are significant opportunities for business growth and entrepreneurship related to outdoor recreation. Ongoing, broad support for outdoor recreation will come much more easily if economic benefits and tax revenues from outdoor recreation tourism make it worth the resources required to manage outdoor recreation assets.

Appendix B Action Plan takes the goals and strategies a step further, listing specific “actions” and naming partners, funding agencies, locations and priority levels. The “actions” needed to implement the goals and strategies are intended to be adaptive to changing conditions and lessons learned. Appendix B is a separately posted document.

2) Need for the Plan and Background Information

Need for the Plan

One of the underlying motivations for developing this plan is that outdoor recreation is essential to quality of life in Dolores County and Montezuma County. Those who live, work, and play in Montezuma County and Dolores County know that the desert canyons, forested mesas, alpine peaks, rivers and reservoirs define daily life and draw people from near and far. A vast area of public lands surrounds the communities here, providing space for adventure, solitude, and connection with nature. These lands exist alongside tribal and agricultural lands that reflect generations of stewardship and deep ties to place. Together, these lands support local economies, connect communities, and define the identity of the region.

The most urgent need for this plan arises from the fact that outdoor recreation can have unwanted impacts on natural resource. For example, creation of or use of unauthorized trails can damage resources and disturb wildlife. Outdoor recreation can also elevate the risk of damaging resources. For example, wildfire risk is rising due to higher levels of human activity in hotter, drier conditions.

This plan also addresses the unwanted impacts that outdoor recreation has on public infrastructure and services. County roads, county law enforcement, rescue, and emergency medical services all absorb impacts from outdoor recreation. Meanwhile, the existing tax structure does not capture enough revenue from outdoor recreation to cover the costs of providing core public infrastructure and services.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative, cross-jurisdictional approach that balances the needs of recreation, conservation, and local communities. The continued decline in funding and staffing at federal lands agencies despite increasing demand for outdoor recreation is another major problem addressed in this plan. By fostering partnerships among public agencies, private landowners, tribes, non-profit trails organizations and other stakeholders, this plan lays the groundwork needed to coordinate planning, share resources, and implement strategies that protect the region's natural and heritage assets while supporting sustainable outdoor recreation.

Baseline Level of Use

In Montezuma County and Dolores County, the drivers of demand for outdoor recreation are locals and tourists. The population is increasing at a moderate pace and tourism has also grown at the state, regional and local scale. This level of growth has manifested as increased demand for outdoor recreation in Montezuma County and Dolores County.

Most of the outdoor recreation in Dolores County and Montezuma County occurs on Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land or in Mesa Verde National Park. Tres Rios BLM and San Juan National Forest units collectively see nearly 2 million uses per

year, which includes uses occurring in the portions of these units located outside of Dolores County and Montezuma County.

FIGURE 2 – BLM AND USFS ANNUAL RECREATION USE ESTIMATES

Agency	Estimated Annual Uses
BLM Tres Rios	480,711
San Juan National Forest	1,315,000
Total	1,795,711

Source: BLM Recreation Management Information System, 2024; USFS Visitor Use Monitoring-San Juan Detail, 2016;

The Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study (2024) estimated outdoor recreation use in Montezuma County at just under 1 million uses per year. Outdoor recreation areas in Montezuma County include Mancos State Park, Mesa Verde National Park, and Hovenweep National Monument, in addition to the vast acreage of USFS land and BLM land, which includes Canyons of the Ancients National Monument.

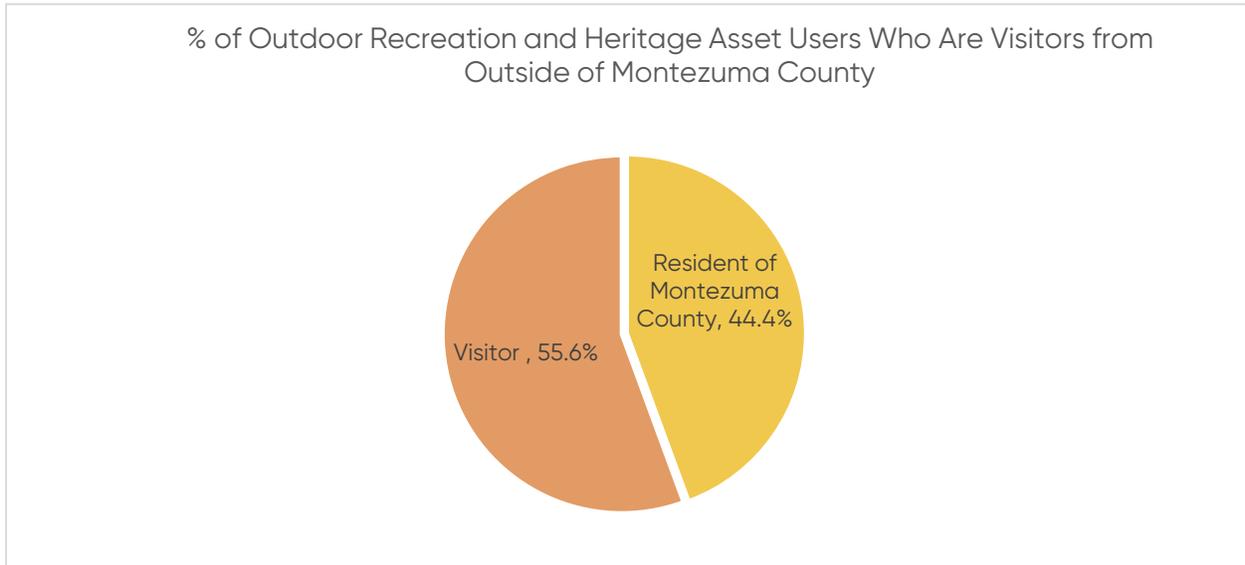
FIGURE 3 – MONTEZUMA COUNTY ANNUAL RECREATION USES

Outdoor Recreation Asset	Total Uses (Annual)
BLM Trails and Roads	76,338
Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center	29,614
Forest Service Trails and Roads	234,716
Forest Service Campgrounds	13,043
McPhee Reservoir: Inspected Boat Launches	12,886
Upper Dolores River, McPhee Reservoir, and other recreation water bodies: paddle sports	29,150
Mancos State Park	32,078
Mesa Verde National Park	499,790
Hovenweep National Monument	28,446
Total	956,061

Source: Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study, 2024

Intercept surveys were conducted for the Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study. Survey results showed that 55.6% of outdoor recreationists are visitors from out of the county and 44.4% are residents of Montezuma County. The survey did not include Dolores County.

FIGURE 4 – % VISITOR VS. RESIDENT OUTDOOR RECREATION USERS



Source: Intercept Survey Results, Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study, 2024

Montelores Residents

The region has grown at a modest rate, with an increase of 1,093 people between 2010 and 2022. This stable population increase over a dozen years has a noticeable effect on the level of outdoor recreation use.

FIGURE 5 – POPULATION CHANGE IN MONTELORES REGION 2010-2022

	Dolores County	Montezuma County	Dolores and Montezuma
Population (2010)	2,027	25,279	27,306
Population (2022)	2,329	26,070	28,399
Population Change (2010-2022)	302	791	1,093

Source: Economic Profile System, Headwaters Economics, 2024

People moving to the area account for a significant proportion of the population growth that has occurred. Net migration exceeded the number of births in Dolores County, which means migration is the major driver of population growth. In Montezuma County, migration is not the major driver of population growth but migration did account for 26% of population growth between 2010 and 2022.

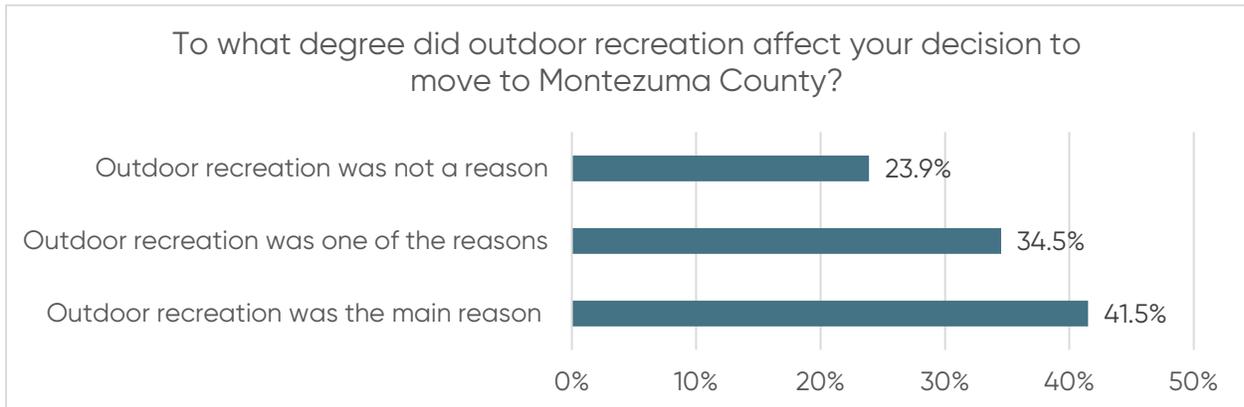
FIGURE 6 – COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH

	Dolores County	Montezuma County	Combined
Net Migration 2010-2022	223	1,111	1,334
Births 2010-2022	209	3,688	3,897

Source: Colorado Demographer's Office, 2024

The significant role migration has in population growth has direct implications on outdoor recreation management because people are moving to Montezuma County or Dolores County specifically for better access to outdoor recreation. Seventy-six percent (76%) of county resident respondents to the Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Intercept Survey indicated that outdoor recreation affected their decision to move to Montezuma County. Over 40% of county resident respondents said that outdoor recreation was the main reason for them moving to the county. This suggests that population growth will increase demand for outdoor recreation.

FIGURE 7 – SURVEY RESULTS: EFFECT OF OUTDOOR RECREATION ON LOCATION DECISIONS



Source: Intercept Survey Results, Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study, 2024

Another consideration for outdoor recreation management is that 17% of the regional population has a disability, and almost half of people with disabilities have ambulatory difficulty. There are ADA accessible outdoor recreation facilities in the county, but the degree to which residents with a disability have adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation is not well-understood. This represents a different type of challenge for outdoor recreation management in the region and will require careful planning and judicious use of funding.

FIGURE 8 –DISABILITY STATISTICS

	Montezuma County	Dolores County	Total
With a Disability	4,692	187	4,879
With Ambulatory Difficulty	2,151	54	2,205

Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Yr, 2022

Poverty is also a known barrier to participation in outdoor recreation. Poverty prevalence for individuals in Montezuma County was 12.5% in 2022 and 16.7% in Dolores County. The poverty prevalence in the region offers a unique challenge in that there are thousands of residents who struggle to afford basic needs, notwithstanding the extra money needed for outdoor recreation. One implication is that outdoor recreation managers need to be cost-sensitive.

Additionally, there is a role for non-profits in providing opportunities to help people who cannot afford to participate in outdoor recreation.

FIGURE 9 – POVERTY PREVALENCE

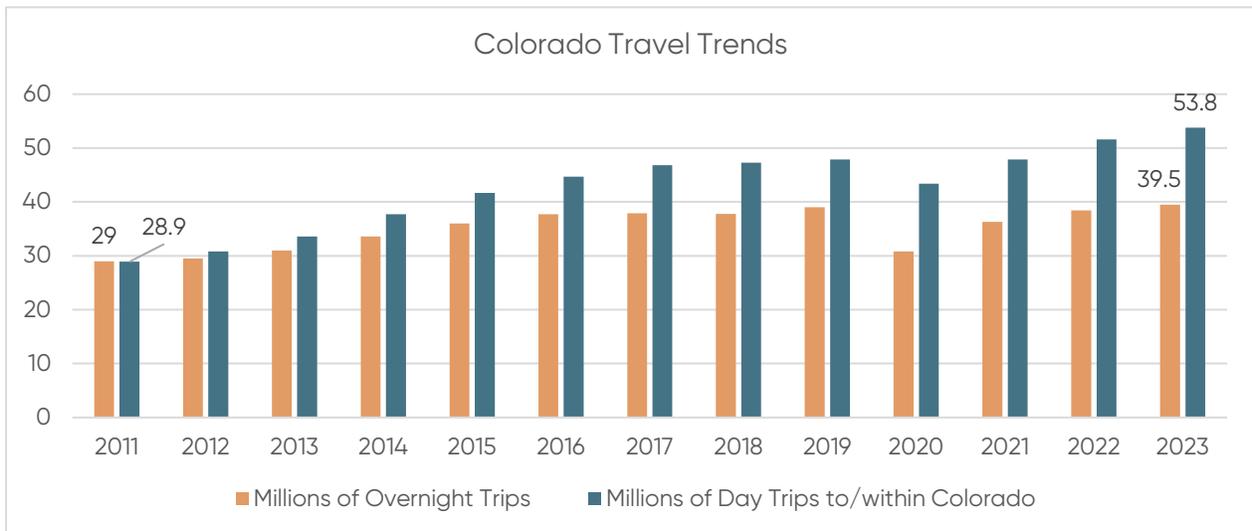
	Montezuma County	Dolores County
People below poverty	12.5%	16.7%
Families below poverty	7.8%	8.8%

Source: Census American Community Survey 5 Yr, 2022

Tourists

Most indicators show that tourism is on the rise and has been for over a decade. In Colorado as a whole, annual overnight trips grew 36%, or 10.5 million trips, and annual day trips grew by 86%, or 24.9 million trips, between 2011-2023. In 2023, there were 35.4 million more trips to or within Colorado than in 2011.

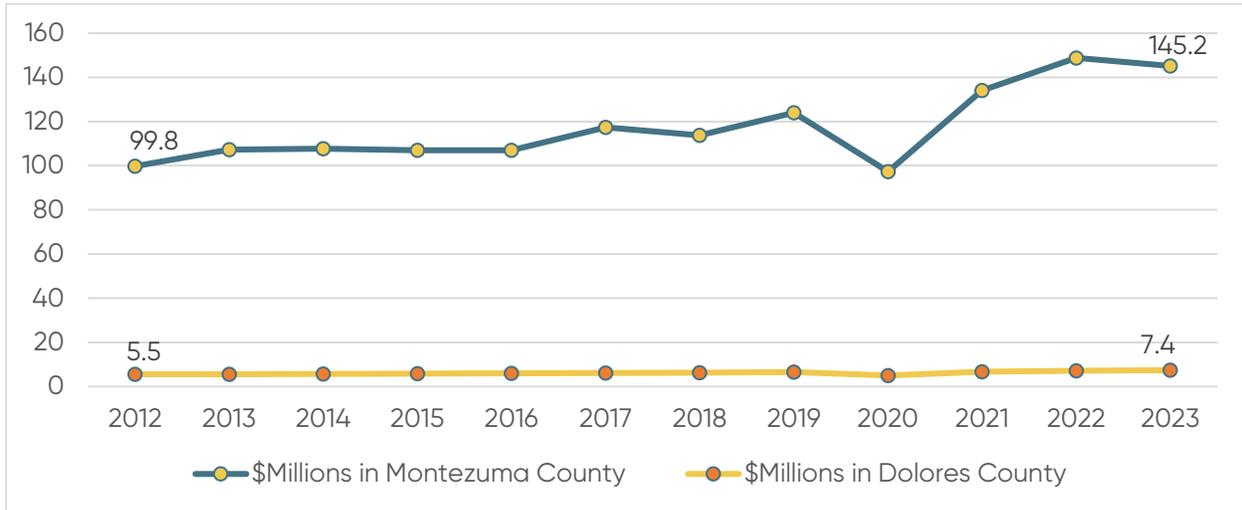
FIGURE 10 – STATEWIDE TOURISM TRENDS



Source: Colorado Tourism Office, Colorado Travel Year 2023, Longwoods International

Colorado Tourism Office estimates travel spending by county which is a key indicator that shows a steady growth in tourism in the Montelores Region. Travel spending in Montezuma County increased by 45.5% in 11 years and travel spending in Dolores County increased 34.5%. Montezuma County has higher travel spending than Dolores County because it contains Mesa Verde National Park and has a more developed visitor services commercial base compared to Dolores County.

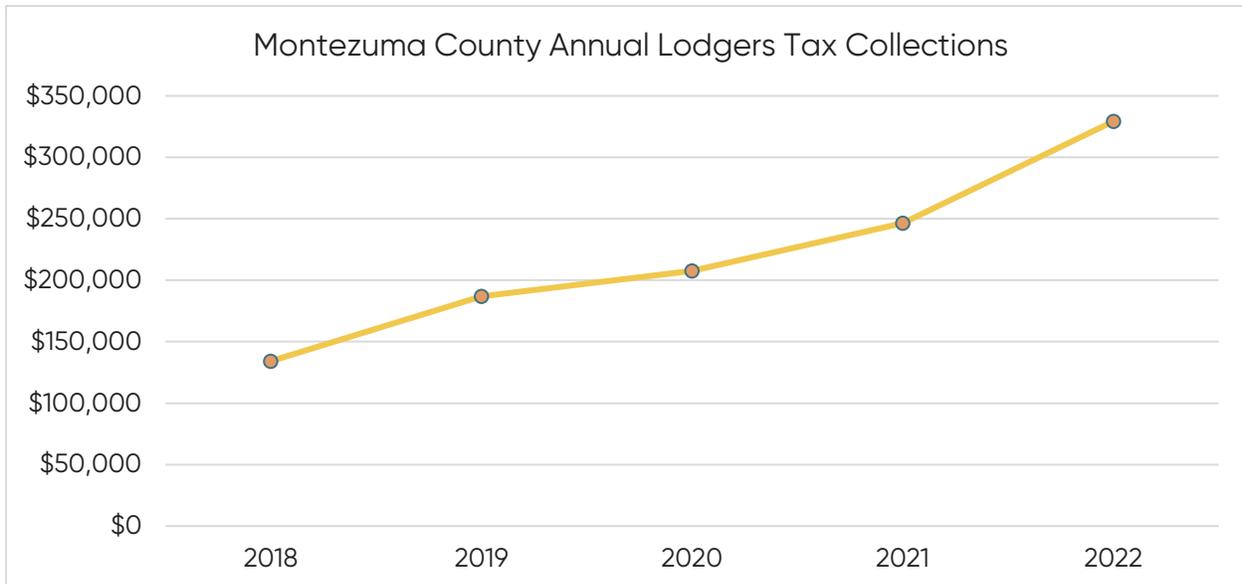
FIGURE 11 – MONTELORES REGION TRAVEL SPENDING (\$MILLIONS)



Source: The Economic Impact of Travel, 2022, Colorado Tourism Office, Dean Runyan Associates

Montezuma County collects tax on lodging throughout the county, which is the best proxy for overnight visitation trends in the Montelores Region. Lodging tax collections grew by 145% in just five years from 2018 to 2023. This shows that tourism trends in Montezuma County are consistent with growth in tourism statewide.

FIGURE 12 – COUNTY LODGERS TAX COLLECTIONS

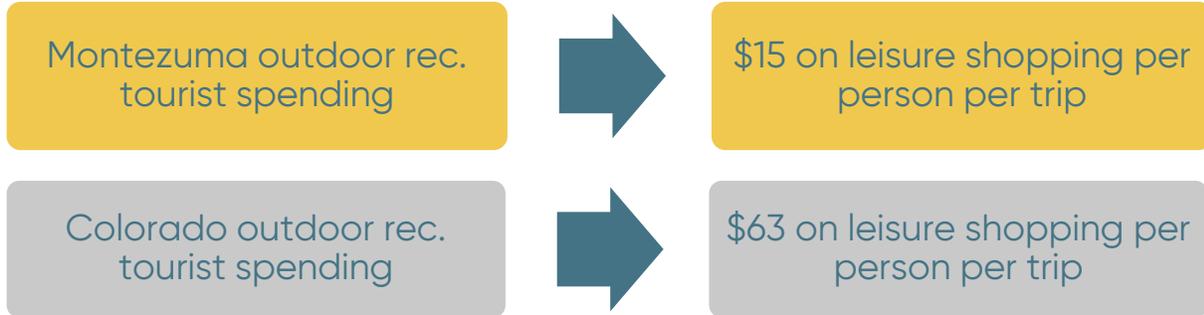


Source: Montezuma County

A comparison of spending patterns by respondents to the Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study Intercept Survey registered an average of \$15 per person per trip spent on leisure shopping. The state average for outdoor trips is \$63

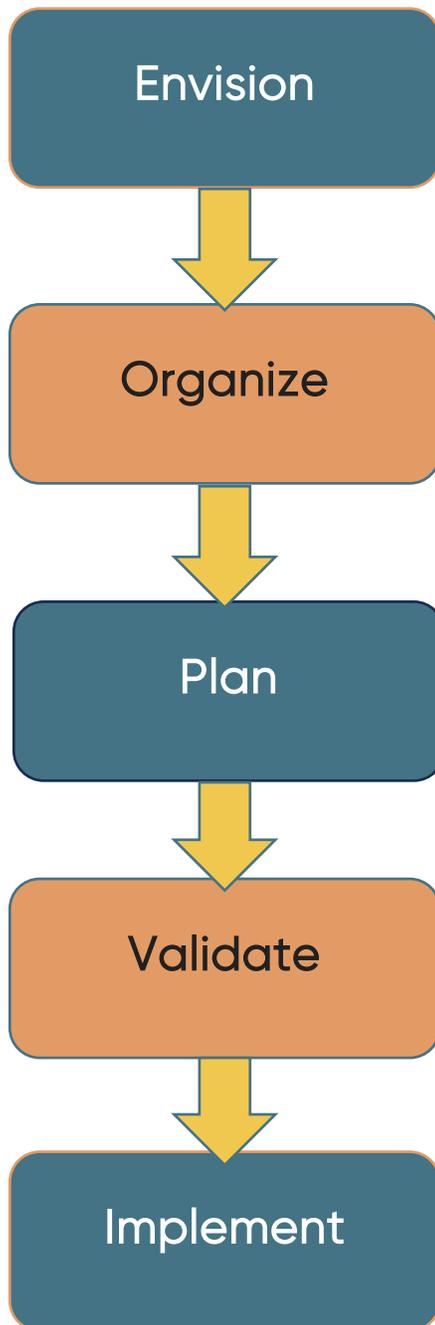
spent per person per trip on leisure shopping. This indicates opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs to earn a living and fill a crucial gap in the visitor experience.

FIGURE 13 – OUTDOOR RECREATION VISITOR EXPENDITURE PATTERNS, STATE VS. MONTEZUMA COUNTY



Source: Intercept Survey Results, Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study, 2024

3) Planning Process and Community Involvement



Envision. The Montelores Executive Committee and Executive Director kicked off the community involvement process with a stakeholder welcome meeting in February 2024. A community web survey was then distributed throughout the Montelores Region. The Coalition hosted another community event with Montezuma County to present and discuss the Montezuma County Outdoor Recreation Use and Economic Impact Study.

Organize. Following the initial community outreach events and community survey, the Montelores Executive Committee seated the Montelores Coalition Roundtable. The Roundtable has representation from diverse organizations and entities and serves as a platform for cooperation, coordination, and synergy among diverse stakeholders, ultimately advancing common goals and objectives.

Plan. The Coalition Roundtable, with the assistance of Durango-based consulting firm RPI Consulting, began the process of developing the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan. Over the course of six meetings, the Coalition Roundtable developed a complete draft of the plan for public review.

Validate. The Montelores Coalition Staff and members of the Executive Committee then held five facilitated community meetings in Cortez, Dove Creek, Mancos, Dolores and Rico to present and discuss the draft plan. After the meeting series, the Executive Committee and Coalition Roundtable then worked with the consultant to incorporate the input from the community meeting series to finalize the plan.

Implement. Stakeholders will consult the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Action Plan to guide and coordinate stepwise implementation actions.

4) How to Use This Plan

The Montelores Coalition Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan is an advisory strategic plan meant to identify, prioritize and implement strategic actions on the landscape for conservation and outdoor recreation. The plan is meant to catalyze the lasting support that is needed to implement plan goals, but it is not prescriptive or legally binding. The plan emphasizes coordinated, cross-jurisdictional planning and stakeholder engagement aimed at leveraging additional funding and resources. The plan should be reviewed and updated as needed at least once every five years.

What does the plan do?

Montelores Coalition uses this plan to focus its day-to-day actions on accomplishing the outdoor recreation and conservation goals the Montelores Coalition Roundtable has set. The Montelores Coalition also uses this plan to rally and coordinate with its partners (see *Who uses this plan?*). Each section of the plan serves a specific purpose:

Background and Need for the Plan. This section provides data and talking points to help the Montelores Coalition and its partners explain why the goals stated in the plan are important and why they should be implemented. As more data is collected and conditions change, future updates can expand or refocus the Background and Need section.

Guiding Principles. Guiding principles are a set of agreed-upon truths that underlie the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan and that are intended to shape the decisions and solutions as the Montelores communities implement the plan. The overall thrust of the plan is to spur action toward accomplishing the goals. The guiding principles articulate important elements of the overall approach used in developing this plan and toward implementing the goals. As such, the guiding principles can be used to inform future choices, to brainstorm ideas, and to identify emerging issues that are not covered in the plan today.

Goals and Strategies. The strategic plan consists of goals (what Montelores Coalition and its partners want to achieve) and strategies (how to achieve each goal). Goals and strategies are organized into five topics, which are areas of concern that characterize the type of work that needs to be done. The goals and strategies frame the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan and form the basis for decisions about the immediate and long-term course of action for the Montelores Coalition.

Action Plan. The action plan is the living workplan for implementing the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan. Each goal requires multiple strategies and most often, each strategy is an entire project by itself. For each strategy, the action plan includes suggested actions, specific partners, priority levels and funding sources. The action plan will be reviewed and updated on an iterative basis as items are completed and as conditions change.

Glossary. The glossary of terms is provided to promote consistent use of terminology by people reading, discussing and implementing this plan.

Potential users of this plan

This is a strategic plan aimed at coordinating action on conservation and outdoor recreation projects. Generally speaking, the plan is intended for any individual, business, organization, or government entity who wants to be involved in implementing the plan.

FIGURE 14 – POTENTIAL USERS OF THIS PLAN



Federal land management agencies including U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and National Parks Service.

State government departments and organizations including but not limited to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Tourism Office, State Land Board, and Department of Local Affairs.

Local governments including Dolores County, Montezuma County, City of Cortez, Town of Dove Creek, Town of Rico, Town of Dolores, Town of Mancos.

Tribal governments, especially Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and its Tribal enterprises.

Marketing organizations such as Mesa Verde Country and local chambers of commerce who interface with visitors.

Economic development agencies such as Region 9 Economic Development and Colorado Workforce Center.

Nongovernment organizations who directly interface with outdoor recreation and conservation including but not limited to trails groups, habitat/wildlife conservation groups, cattlemen's associations, watershed groups, water conservation groups, land trusts, and sportspersons and outdoor recreation groups.

Public schools and colleges at work in the region.

Private and public sector funders of conservation and outdoor recreation.

5) Guiding Principles

Guiding principles are a set of agreed upon truths that underlie the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan and that are intended to shape the decisions and solutions as the Montelores communities implement the plan.

Guiding Principles for the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan

1. This is an advisory strategic plan; there are no mandates.
2. Conservation and outdoor recreation are not mutually exclusive and they can occur together or separately.
3. People living or working in Montezuma County and Dolores County are effective stewards of land, water, wildlife, heritage and outdoor recreation infrastructure.
4. Implementing the Montelores Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan will require a variety of public and private partners, stakeholders, networks, knowledge, and resources.
5. Federal lands agencies are required to follow federal rules and regulations and must follow the management plans created for each unit as well as the management plans for developed recreation facilities and other subareas.
6. The best available science and information must inform outdoor recreation management and conservation.
7. Long-term, stable and broad funding sources are essential for conservation and to support outdoor recreation.
8. The growing demand for outdoor recreation management can only be met by deliberately growing and sustaining a local workforce.
9. Population growth, increasing tourism, use of natural resources and evolving lifestyle preferences have created a need for properly balancing outdoor recreation use with natural resource conservation.
10. Conservation and meeting the outdoor recreation needs of Montezuma County residents and Dolores County residents take priority over accommodating tourists.
11. Outdoor recreation has impacts on the landscape, especially on wildlife, and some of those impacts can be mitigated while other impacts cannot be mitigated.
12. A diversity of high-quality outdoor assets in the Montelores Region including purpose-built ADA facilities mean that outdoor recreation is accessible to and inclusive of most people, but barriers still exist for some groups.
13. Increased sales and tax revenues from outdoor recreation are predicated on private and public investment in the downtowns and commercial districts in the region.
14. Agriculture can be positively or negatively impacted by conservation and outdoor recreation efforts.

6) Goals and Strategies

Goals are what the Montelores Coalition and its partners want to achieve and strategies are how to do that. The details about specific actions and partnerships for each strategy are included in Appendix B. Action Plan.

Goals and strategies are organized by topics, which are areas of concern that characterize the type of work that needs to be done.

Topic 1 – Exceptional outdoor recreation experiences. This topic focuses on the outdoor recreation management strategies and infrastructure improvements needed to sustain the exceptional outdoor recreation experiences that are so highly valued by Montezuma County and Dolores County residents, in the context of ever-increasing levels of outdoor recreation use.

Topic 2 – Equitable access to outdoor recreation. The focus of this topic is to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of outdoor experiences and opportunities for individuals with disabilities and for those who cannot afford outdoor recreation or are limited by other socio-economic barriers.

Topic 3 – Conservation of natural and heritage resources. Topic 3 addresses the key directive of this plan which is to conserve and enhance natural resources, heritage resources, working lands, and wildlife populations. This includes identifying impacts from outdoor recreation occurring today and anticipating future impacts in order to reduce unwanted impacts and to improve outcomes for natural resources, wildlife, and heritage resources.

Topic 4 – Capacity, workforce and funding for conservation and outdoor recreation management and infrastructure. Federal lands agencies do not have the funding or staff to accomplish the goals set out in this plan on their own, but the agencies do have the ability to form partnerships with organizations that can increase the capacity for outdoor recreation management and capital projects.

Topic 5 – Outdoor recreation business growth and development. Outdoor recreation drives sales at local businesses in Montezuma County and Dolores County but the volume of outdoor recreation tourism taking place in the region has the potential to generate more sales in some categories. A better capture rate of visitor dollars in the region could also yield revenues through voter approved sales and lodging taxes that could help pay for the impacts visitors have on public services and facilities.

Topic 1 – Exceptional Outdoor Recreation Experiences

Goal 1.1 – Accommodate the increase in outdoor recreation visitors from outside of the region while maintaining high quality outdoor recreation experiences for locals.

Strategy 1.1.1 – Direct visitors toward areas that can accommodate them.

Strategy 1.1.2 – Maintain opportunities for high quality dispersed camping experiences.

Strategy 1.1.3 – Make improvements to trails infrastructure and associated access and trailhead infrastructure to accommodate the growing regional population.

Strategy 1.1.4 – Expand and improve recreation access to the Dolores River upstream of the Town of Dolores.

Strategy 1.1.5 – Develop low-effort, easy-to-find attractions for tourists.

Topic 2 – Equitable Access to Outdoor Recreation

Goal 2.1 – Increase outdoor recreation participation by historically underrepresented populations.

Strategy 2.1.1 – Work with youth outdoors and seniors outdoors organizations to conduct an inventory and gap analysis and to facilitate networking among organizations to fill unmet needs.

Strategy 2.1.2 – Support entities and efforts focused on reducing the cost and increasing the accessibility of outdoor gear.

Strategy 2.1.3 – Engage regional non-profits and businesses to help fund organizations and programs aimed at increasing outdoor recreation by historically underrepresented populations.

Goal 2.2 – Increase outdoor recreation visitation by individuals with disabilities.

Strategy 2.2.1 – Convene regional adaptive sports organizations and disabled veterans groups to strengthen relationships and share knowledge about getting people with disabilities recreating outdoors.

Strategy 2.2.2 – Coordinate between adaptive sports organizations and those who provide transportation for people with disabilities to fill unmet transportation needs.

Strategy 2.2.3 – Work with regional adaptive sports organizations to access and leverage funding that increases outdoor recreation opportunities for people with spinal cord injury disabilities.

Strategy 2.2.4 – Develop and promote digital and/or print maps of ADA accessible outdoor recreation facilities in the region.

Strategy 2.2.5 – Explore the feasibility of developing trails in nature that follow the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) trail design guidelines and that are served by ADA accessible toilets and adequate parking.

Strategy 2.2.6 – Develop a project plan aimed specifically at siting and building ADA accessible toilets.

Topic 3 – Conservation of Natural and Heritage Resources

Goal 3.1 – Manage the near-term and long-term impacts of outdoor recreation on natural resources, heritage resources, and outdoor recreation infrastructure.

Strategy 3.1.1 – Implement stewardship education regarding natural resource, heritage resource and wildlife conservation.

Strategy 3.1.2 – Improve and expand the collection of outdoor recreation use data and heritage site visitation data.

Strategy 3.1.3 – Use the best available science and information to gauge impacts of outdoor recreation use on natural resources, including wildlife populations, and heritage resources.

Strategy 3.1.4 – Rehabilitate resources that have been degraded by outdoor recreation or other impacts.

Strategy 3.1.5 – Coordinate with regional non-profits to advance complementary conservation goals and strategies while avoiding duplication and conflicting efforts.

Strategy 3.1.6 – Establish, support and promote conservation and recreation “strike teams” to be deployed for restoration projects and maintenance throughout the region.

Goal 3.2 – Increase outdoor recreation and conservation stewardship on federal and non-federal public lands and on private lands.

Strategy 3.2.1 – Protect and enhance ecosystems with high biodiversity and/or priority habitats.

Strategy 3.2.2 – Engage trails group volunteers at a broader level for outdoor recreation and conservation projects beyond trail construction and maintenance to include natural resources management and stewardship.

Strategy 3.2.3 – Identify and develop a list of outdoor recreation and conservation projects or tasks with which volunteers could help and be effective.

Strategy 3.2.4 – Reinforce opportunities for voluntourism.

Strategy 3.2.5 – Incentivize voluntary conservation activities on private lands or non-federal public lands with technical and financial support.

Goal 3.3 – Continue to collaborate with federal lands managers for multiple use management.

Strategy 3.3.1 – Engage the ranching community and grazing permittees in stewardship education efforts.

Strategy 3.3.2 – Explore the potential for agricultural-based conservation or restoration projects.

Strategy 3.3.3 – Provide non-binding insights and recommendations to land managers engaged in outdoor recreation and conservation planning or policy decisions in Dolores County and Montezuma County.

Topic 4 – Capacity, Workforce and Funding for Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Management and Infrastructure

Goal 4.1 – Develop an advisory outdoor recreation and conservation projects plan.

Strategy 4.1.1 – Support the trails groups and conservation groups working in Dolores County and Montezuma County.

Strategy 4.1.2 – Establish a list of top priority outdoor recreation and conservation projects in the region (not including trails) with planning level cost estimates and, at the request of project stakeholders, lead a regionally coordinated approach to funding and implementing the projects.

Strategy 4.1.3 – Seek formal support for the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan from local governments and other strategic partners.

Goal 4.2 – Develop and implement a funding strategy for outdoor recreation and conservation projects.

Strategy 4.2.1 – Develop ongoing revenue sources, other than user fees, to leverage toward implementing the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan.

Strategy 4.2.2 – Inventory funding sources and find funding partners who support the goals in the Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan.

Strategy 4.2.3 – Position Montelores Coalition as fiscal agent for grants on projects that align with Coalition goals.

Goal 4.3 – Implement workforce development services that meet the needs of job seekers and public lands agencies as well as other entities who employ outdoor recreation maintenance and management and natural resource conservation personnel.

Strategy 4.3.1 – Work with higher education institutions and conservation corps to develop workforce development programs and create employment pathways in outdoor recreation management and natural resource conservation.

Topic 5 – Outdoor Recreation Business Growth and Development

Goal 5.1 – Facilitate growth of existing outdoor recreation industry establishments and support startups.

Strategy 5.1.1 – Identify market gaps and business opportunities for new outdoor recreation businesses.

Strategy 5.1.2 – Explore potential for and community support for an annual outdoor recreation event focused on the entire Montelores region.

Goal 5.2 – Facilitate the growth of visitor services establishments and startups serving outdoor recreation visitors.

Strategy 5.2.1 – Plan, design and implement regional wayfinding covering gateways into towns and directions to outdoor recreation sites, heritage destinations, downtowns, and public parking areas.

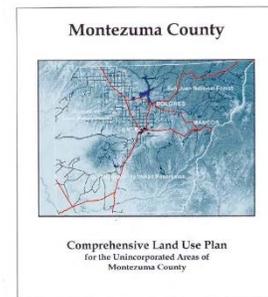
Goal 5.3 – Use outdoor recreation marketing to help manage outdoor recreation and to help local businesses increase sales.

Strategy 5.3.1– Offer visitors from out of the area a curated, high-quality outdoor recreation experience while also encouraging them to visit areas that can accommodate them.

Strategy 5.3.2– Integrate outdoor recreation and heritage resource stewardship education into visitor communications.

Appendix A. Guidance from Existing Strategic Plans

Montezuma County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Chapter 12 Federal Lands in Montezuma County of the county’s comprehensive plan, which was formally adopted in 1997, specifically addresses the issues and policies around Federal Land management. This section reinforces the message that Federal Lands are integral to the economy and day to day life in the county. The comprehensive plan states that “tourism and recreation” depend on federal lands as do other industries including grazing, timber harvesting, mining, energy development, water resource development, hunting and preservation. The plan says “the county strongly supports the long-established policy of multiple use on federal lands.” Multiple use policies allow a diversity of economic activities and support quality of life in the county. To this end, the county plan calls for partnerships and cooperation between the county and the land management agencies.



Dolores County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The 2021 Dolores County CEDS includes the following strategies that are relevant to the Montelores Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan:

- “Develop designated trails around Dove Creek and western Dolores County.” This strategy contemplates trails and trail systems on public lands near town.
- “Develop designated trails around Rico.” This strategy contemplates trails for fishing and river access as well as winter trail development.
- “River corridor project and easement on Rio Grande Southern Railroad Grade.” This nearly complete project is now fundraising and planning for a pedestrian bridge to connect to the railroad grade.
- “Develop National Conservation Area for Lower Dolores River” This is the preferred administrative designation for the community to manage recreation along the river corridor.
- “Develop recreational opportunities for youth in Dove Creek.” This strategy acknowledges the role of public lands in providing recreational opportunities for young people.

Montezuma County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The 2021 Montezuma County CEDS includes the following strategies that are relevant to the Montelores Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan:

- “Utilize area attractions to increase visitation in Dolores.” A key component of this strategy is to increase visitation to Boggy Draw and McPhee.
- “Homegrown talent initiative” The programs resulting from this strategy could be used to develop a local workforce of outdoor recreation managers.
- “Paths to Mesa Verde” This multi-use trail would link communities to outdoor recreation without needing to use a motor vehicle.

- “Lake McPhee Recreation Plan” This long-standing strategy seeks increase recreation use by improving and relocating the main boat ramp and marina.
- “Pursue Countywide Trails Plan” This plan would aim to connect communities together and to trails systems on public lands.
- “Address Forest Health, Water and Wildfire Risks” Building resiliency benefits any use of public lands.
- “Painted Hand Pueblo access and trailhead improvements.” These improvements have been completed and have greatly improved the user-friendliness of the sites.
- “BLM Aqueduct Trail System” This trail system has been completed, creating a close-to-town trail system for Mancos.
- “Improve Phil’s World Intersection” This would greatly improve safety and user-friendliness of one of the most popular trail systems in SW Colorado.

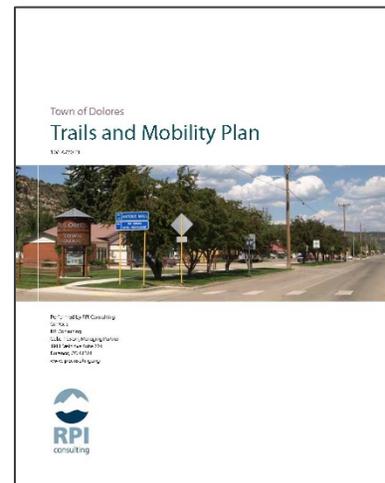
Town of Mancos Parks and Trails Master Plan. This 2023 plan emphasizes outdoor recreation in a number of concept plans:

- Connect Boyle Park to Cottonwood Park along the Mancos River
- River access improvements.
- “Mancos Incline” fitness stairway across from Chicken Creek
- Trail connection to eastern Montezuma County public lands
- Connect Chicken Creek to old railroad grade loop
- Utilize nearby State Land Trust parcels for trails and recreation



Town of Dolores Trails and Mobility Plan. This 2013 plan pertains to outdoor recreation and portions of it have been implemented.

- Goal 2 – Connect the town directly to public lands.
- Goal 3 – Establish Downtown as a starting point for recreational outings.



City of Cortez Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This 2016 plan acknowledges that trail improvements ranked highest in a citizen survey. The plan provides support for investing in outdoor recreation facilities already owned by the city and portions of it have been implemented.

- Continue development of Geer Natural Area with trails, bike skill park, fishing/boat dock, elevated walkway, ADA accessibility, and picnic shelter.

- Expand paved trails. This includes Paths to Mesa Verde, and other multipurpose paved trails.

Town of Rico Regional Master Plan. This 2004 plan laid the early planning groundwork for much of what has been accomplished since.

- Goal C: Establish and maintain a regional trail system for a broad range of outdoor recreational activities.
- The plan calls to “begin implementation of the Rico River Park Plan” and today, river corridor planning and investment remains a priority for Rico.
- Promote beneficial use of geothermal resources.
- Preserve open space areas for outdoor recreational use.

San Juan National Forest. San Juan National Forest uses the following management plans:

- San Juan National Forest Plan
- San Juan National Forest Travel Management Maps/Plan
- McPhee Recreation Complex Management Plan

Bureau of Land Management Tres Rios Field Office. Tres Rios BLM uses the following management plans:

- Tres Rios BLM Resource Management Plan
- Tres Rios BLM Travel Management Maps/Plan
- Canyons of the Ancients National Monument Resource Management Plan

State of Colorado Strategic Plans and Other Guidance. State of Colorado has developed several resources that will be useful in implementing the Montelores Coalition Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan.

- [Colorado’s Outdoors Strategy, 2025](#). This plan summarizes the statewide strategic framework within which the Montelores Coalition has operated as a regional partnership. This plan includes Shared Values statements, North Star goals and objectives, Colorado’s outdoor principles, and collective strategies, all of which have guided Montelores Coalition in its development of the Montelores Coalition Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan.
- [Colorado’s Guide to Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind, 2021](#). This resource developed by a state appointed taskforce provides conservation best practices and science for trails planning and construction.
- [Colorado Parks and Wildlife Fencing with Wildlife in Mind](#). This resource document provides conservation design standards for fencing.
- [Recommendations to Avoid and Minimize Impacts to Wildlife from Land Use Development in Colorado, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, 2023](#). This matrix lists management best practices and mitigation strategies for thirty-one habitat types.

- 2020 Status Report: Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors, Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This report provides a baseline of scientific information related to big game populations in Colorado in order to improve the conservation of big game winter range and migration corridors.
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife GIS data and maps. Public GIS data and maps include wildlife species data, administrative boundaries, infrastructure and energy resources and development.

Appendix B. Action Plan, Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Plan

See separately posted document.

Glossary of Terms

Action. In strategic planning, as step toward implementing a strategy.

ADA Accessible. Infrastructure that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act standards for accessibility.

Carrying capacity. Maximum level of outdoor recreation use that and environment can sustainably support.

Conservation. The planned and science-based management of natural resources to allow use while preventing exploitation, destruction or extinction.

Dispersed camping. Camping on public lands anywhere outside of a designated campground.

Employment pathway. A structured process of developing the education and training needed to progress within a specific field.

Equity. When everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from has the opportunity to thrive. Equitable outdoor recreation is accessible to everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

Federal land managers. This includes Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, National Parks Service, and Bureau of Reclamation.

Fiscal agent. An entity that manages financial tasks on behalf of another entity.

Guiding principles. A set of agreed upon truths that are intended to shape the decisions and solutions as a strategic plan is developed and as it is implemented.

Goal. What the community wants or needs to achieve.

Heritage resources. Archaeological or historic sites, burial sites, artifacts and other objects of historical, cultural or religious significance.

Heritage tourism. Traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.

Natural resources. Any biological, mineral or aesthetic asset afforded directly by nature.

Outdoor recreation. The broad range of nature- and place-based experiences offered by the outdoors.

Outdoor recreation infrastructure. The built physical assets that allow for outdoor recreation to occur. For example, access roads, parking areas, toilets, signage/kiosks, campgrounds, boat ramps, trails, and gates.

Public lands. Public lands are owned by a government agency and may be accessed by any member of the public. Public lands include but are not limited to US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, National Parks Service, and Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, municipal parks and open space, and publicly accessible parcels owned by the Colorado State Land Board.

Stakeholder. A person or organization with an interest in or concern with outdoor recreation and conservation.

Stewardship. An ethic that embodies the responsible management and care of public lands and waterways by the public and land managers alike.

Tourism. The aggregate of commerce and activity in a given area associated with people visiting from outside of the area.

Tourists. People from outside of Montezuma and Dolores Counties who are visiting a location in these counties.

Trail system. A trail system is a network of relatively concentrated trails typically designed as nested loops and generally accessed via one or two trailheads.

Travel route. A legally created public road or trail in an outdoor recreation area.

Visitors. People from outside of Montezuma and Dolores Counties who are visiting a location these Counties.