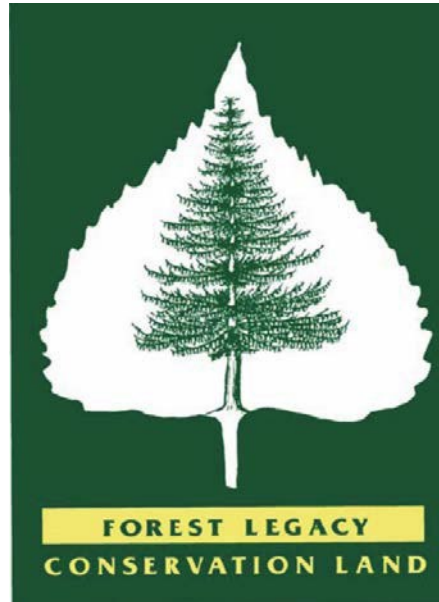


# Colorado Forest Legacy Program

2020 Assessment of Need

2025 Review and Update



Cooperatively funded by U.S. Forest Service and the Colorado State Forest Service

Original analysis by Taylor Shook at Western Environmental and Ecology

Updated in 2025 by the Colorado State Forest Service

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## Introduction

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a state-administered program that uses federal funds to permanently protect forested land. The main purpose of the FLP is to identify and protect environmentally, ecologically and culturally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses, to promote forestland management, and to support other conservation opportunities. Desired outcomes include conservation of important forest-based ecological, scenic, cultural, fish, wildlife and recreational resources. By permanently conserving Colorado's forests, Colorado's FLP (CFLP) directly supports the goals of the FLP program, as well as goals outlined in Colorado's Forest Action Plan (CFAP).

Through the CFLP program, the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) purchases conservation easements or land from willing sellers, ensuring forests are conserved and managed to maintain or expand important public benefits. Land must meet certain criteria, outlined in this document, to qualify for the CFLP. If land does not meet these criteria, it is ineligible to participate.

The CFLP is a competitive program, where landowners and project partners work together to submit an application to the CSFS, and, if successful, work with the CSFS to compete on a national level. If the project is approved on both the state and national level, it may be entered into the CFLP. As part of participating in the CFLP, landowners agree to create, maintain and follow a multi-resource management plan (MRMP) that is updated every 10 years. The CSFS provides annual inspections to ensure compliance with the CFLP and supports landowners by connecting them to other resources.

## Statement of purpose

Colorado’s forests help make Colorado a highly desirable place to live, work and play. From 14,000-foot mountain peaks to tree lined rivers, Colorado is unrivaled in scenic vistas, forest and ecological diversity, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. The state’s varied environment includes high alpine meadows, spruce-fir forests, lodgepole and ponderosa pine forests, aspen meadows, mountain deserts, plains, riparian areas, shrub lands and grass prairies. This diversity of ecosystems provides crucial habitat for numerous wildlife species, ranging from the federally endangered black-footed ferret and threatened Mexican spotted owl, to herds of elk and mule deer. Residents and visitors capitalize on this diversity through abundant recreational opportunities, such as hiking, skiing and wandering through Colorado’s forests.

Colorado’s wide base of recreation opportunities, strong economy and high quality of life has led to an influx of new residents. With a population increase of 14.5% between 2010 and 2019, Colorado was the third fastest growing state in the nation (U.S. Census, 2019). Across Colorado, cities are expanding to meet the needs of this population growth, supporting not just new residents, but also the rapidly expanding second housing market and high-end small parcel ranches. Large tracts of land are being subdivided into smaller parcels to accommodate this growth, and new transportation and utility corridors are being cut across the landscape. This type of landscape fragmentation results in concurrent forest fragmentation and conversion of forests to non-forest uses, leading to a loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, altered hydrology and impacts to outdoor recreational opportunities. Additionally, Colorado contains many valuable mineral resources, which often require the removal of forests to access. The CFLP seeks to address the threat posed by the pressure to convert forests to non-forest uses by working with private landowners and the State Land Board to conserve privately owned forested lands. By conserving forests through the CFLP, the CSFS supports the CFAP by retaining the beauty of our state, enhancing ecology and wildlife, and increasing public recreational opportunities now and into the future.

## Colorado Forest Action Plan goals

Below is a list of goals from the CFAP supported by implementation of the CFLP.

Theme	Goals
Forest conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep forests as forests</li><li>• Improve forest productivity</li><li>• Promote adaptive management</li></ul>
Living with wildfire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote community fire adaptation</li><li>• Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the role of fire in ecological processes</li> </ul>
Watershed protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and maintain water quality and quantity</li> <li>• Improve resiliency of critical water infrastructure</li> <li>• Sustain or restore fundamental ecological functions for watershed health</li> </ul>
Forest wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve, enhance and protect critical habitat</li> <li>• Integrate habitat considerations into forestry activities</li> <li>• Increase public understanding of the connections between forestry and habitat</li> </ul>
Forest products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and develop more resilient industry capacity required to meet forest management needs</li> <li>• Increase the number of forest acres treated annually through cost offsets of increased utilization</li> </ul>

### History of the CFLP

In summer 2000, Gov. Bill Owens designated the CSFS as the lead agency for the CFLP. As part of the initial creation of the CFLP through the 2001 Assessment of Need, the CSFS proposed eight forest legacy areas (FLA), which outlined where in Colorado the program would be implemented. In 2002 the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, approved Colorado to participate in the FLP, accepting and instituting the proposed FLAs. These FLAs were updated in 2006, then again in 2020.

The 2020 Assessment of Need (AON) for the CFLP, which this document is based on, evaluated the 2020 conditions and uses of privately owned forests in Colorado. Results of the values and attitudes regarding private forests identified by stakeholders in the previous AON were updated to reflect conditions in 2020. Based on this input, the CSFS and State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (SFSCC) recommended eight FLAs for continued inclusion in the CFLP.

### 2025 review

According to FLP Implementation Guidelines, Colorado’s FAP must be updated every 10 years and reviewed 5 five years. This document represents the review of the 2020 FAP AON. The 2025 review includes various minor changes, including adding a table of contents, expanding the introduction, clarifying who manages the program, adding definitions where needed and other minor details. Based on a public survey, input from the SFSCC and various other stakeholders, the assessment criteria were updated to more closely match the goals of the CFAP, and eligibility was expanded to include the Colorado State Land Board (SLB). There were no changes to the 2020 FLAs.

# Colorado background information

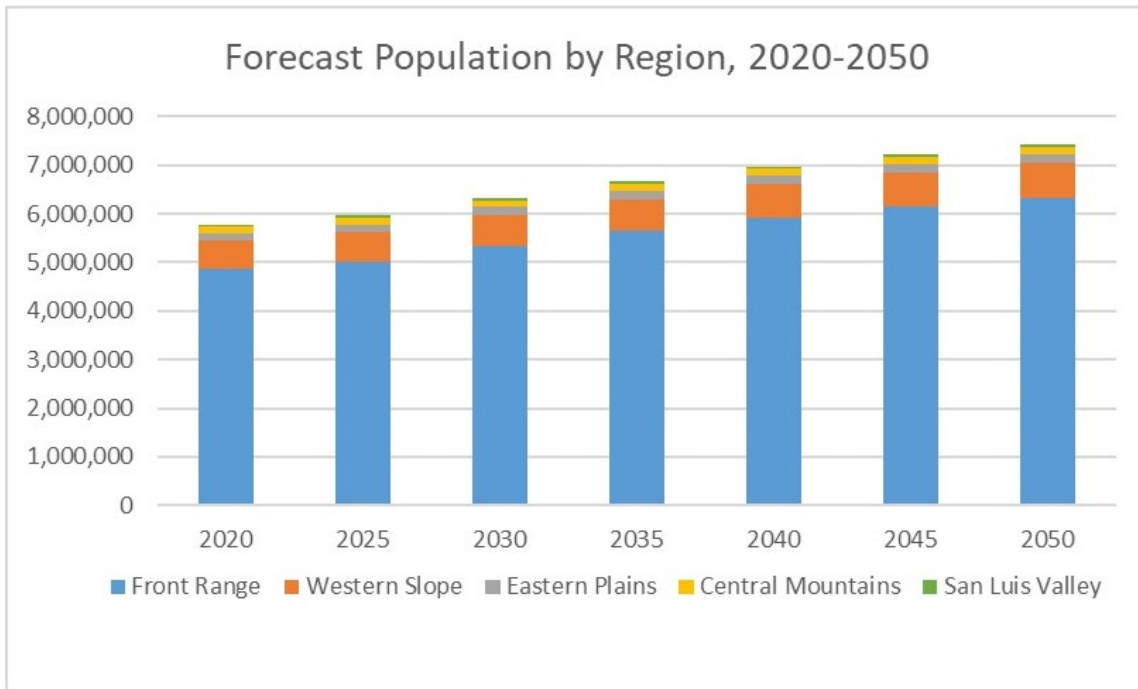
## Cultural heritage

People have lived in the region now called Colorado long before it received statehood in 1876. Archaeological sites across Colorado contain artifacts dating from the end of the last Ice Age, showing evidence of human habitation at least 10,000 years ago. The earliest visitors to Curecanti Recreation Area in the Upper Gunnison River Basin were most likely large game hunters and gathers, although many different types of people and cultures lived and utilized the land across time. Prior to European colonialism in the 1600s, more than 48 tribal nations had ties to this land, including the Apache, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Pueblo, Shoshone and Ute. While many tribes still call Colorado home, today Colorado legally recognizes only two resident tribes, the Southern Ute Tribe and the Ute Mountain Ute.

Outside of tribal lands, the 2020 Colorado State Demography Office lists Colorado's population as 67% white, 22% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Black, 3% Asian, with the remainder falling into the categories of Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska native, or two or more races (percentages do not total 100 because individuals may report more than one race). Conserving forests through FLP supports the conservation of cultural spaces traditionally utilized by tribes, as well as the cultural heritage of all people who live, work and play in Colorado.

## Population

Increases to Colorado's population reflect directly on the pressure that Colorado's forests face from development. From 2010-2019, Colorado's population increased more than twice as fast as the national average, growing at a rate of 14.5% versus 6.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Since the 1960s, Colorado's population has almost tripled, growing from about 1.8 million to more than 5.7 million in 2023. The Colorado State Demographic Office notes that between 2020 to 2030 Colorado is predicted to continue growing at double the national rate, with 90% of this growth concentrated along the Front Range and in the Denver metro area. This will result in the conversion of forests and other spaces into housing, commercial, industrial and utility landscapes. While there may be fewer people moving into rural areas, even small increases in population in fragile rural ecosystems bring conservation challenges, as infrastructure expands into previously intact forests and working lands. Conserving forests through the CFLP allows residents and visitors to enjoy forest benefits long into the future.



Source: Colorado State Demography Office Vintage 2023 Population Forecasts

### Land ownership and use

Of the 66.6 million acres in Colorado, 38 million (57%) are privately owned, 24.1 million acres (36%) are managed federally (Federation of American Scientists, 2020) and 2.8 million surface acres (4%) are managed by the state (Colorado State Land Board, 2019). Federal land ownership within the state is composed of 60% USFS, 35% Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 3% National Park Service (NPS), 2% Department of Defense (DOD) and 1% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Approximately 22.9 million acres (34%) of Colorado is forested. Of the forested land in the state, approximately 73.1% is federally owned, 23.6% is owned privately and 3.3% is owned by the state and local entities (Colorado State Forest Service, 2020). As of 2012, approximately 48% of Colorado was in farmland (Farmland Information Center, 2012).

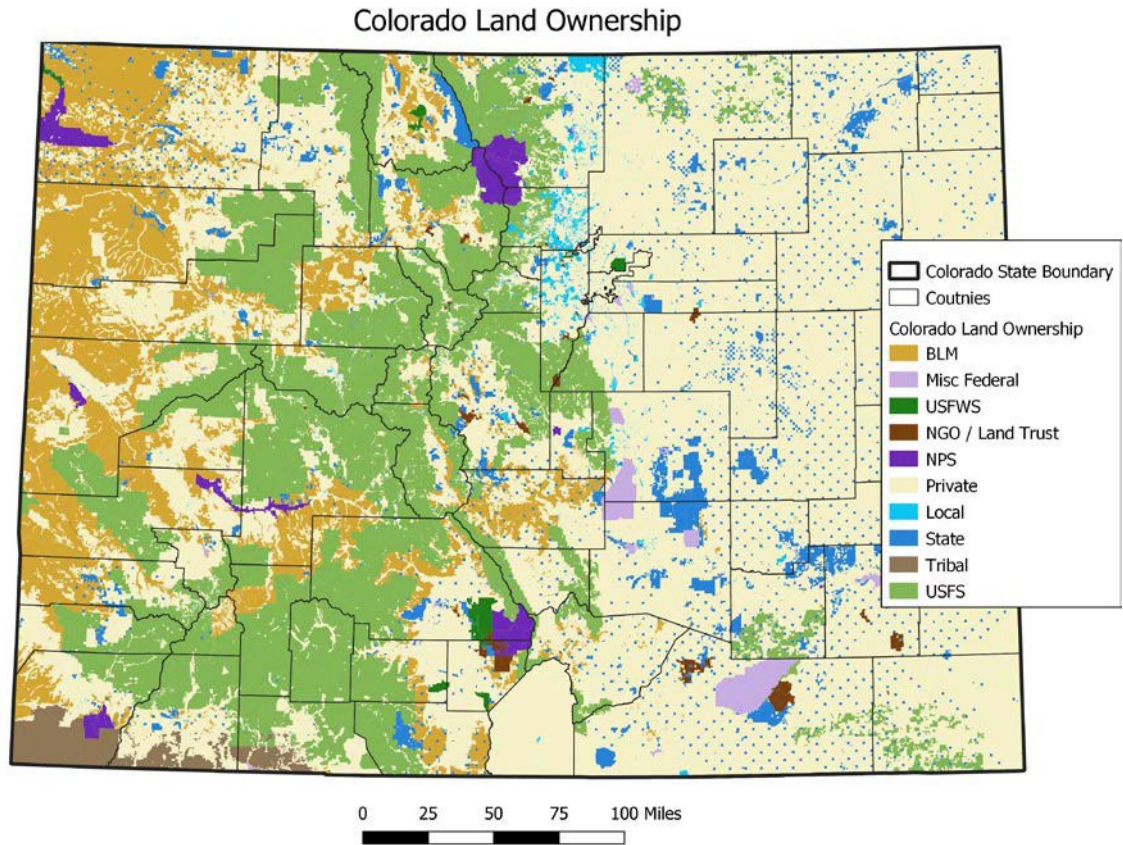
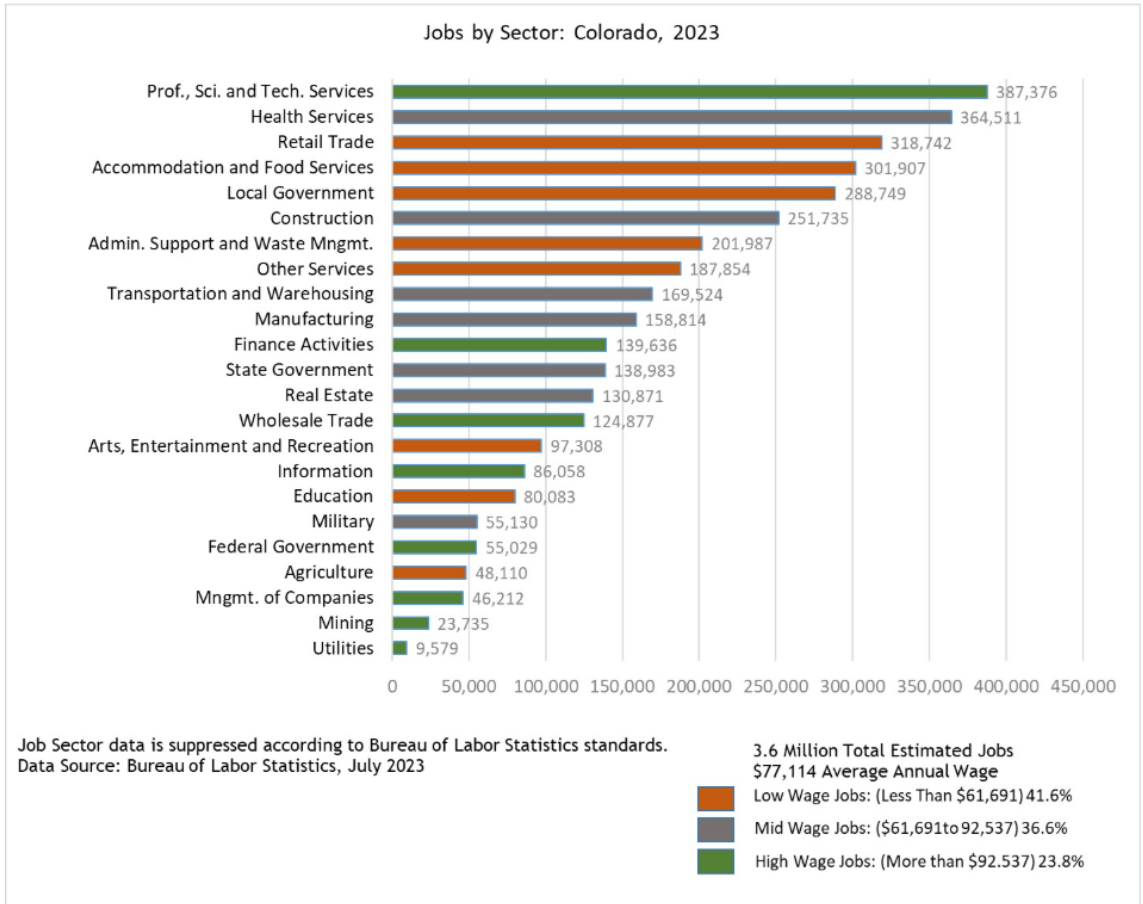


Figure 1. Colorado Ownership and Protection Map, 2019, Colorado Natural Heritage Program

## Economics

Colorado’s economy has expanded with its population growth. According to the 2025 report from the Colorado State Demography Office, from 2019-2023, Colorado jobs increased by about 4.9%, representing an annual compound growth of about 1.2%. In 2023, professional, science and technology services employed the most people in Colorado, followed closely by health services and retail. Trends indicated that these sectors will continue to expand, with declining job opportunities in mining, agriculture and administration. Overall, the increase in job opportunities has been concentrated in the front range areas, with more rural counties experiencing a drop in job opportunities as well as job pay for what employment is available.



Source: Colorado State Demography Office Vintage 2023 Job Estimates

## Climate

Colorado has low humidity and an average annual precipitation of 17 inches. The average annual temperature is 43.5°F, although both temperature and precipitation rates depend greatly on elevation, aspect, urbanization and other factors. Wildfires, flooding, hail, tornadoes, blizzards, avalanches and earthquakes occur within the state. Although temperature decreases and precipitation increases with altitude, the climate is also dependent on winds and topographic features.

The Rocky Mountains are the main source of the diverse weather conditions in most areas of Colorado. An increase of 1,000 feet in elevation translates to a temperature decrease of 4-5° F. Across Colorado, wind often blows from the west. As air blows across the mountains, it is forced up in elevation, causing it to cool. Cooler air holds less water than warmer air, causing more precipitation to fall on the windward (west) side of the mountains.

The mountains of Colorado have summer highs around 80° F in the valleys while higher mountains experience highs around 60° F. Winter low temperatures can drop below -30° F and in extreme cases have been below -60° F. Winds on the mountain peaks, or above 11,000 feet, can exceed 50 to 100 mph. Most of the precipitation within peaks and mountain ranges occurs during winter months.

The Eastern Plains of Colorado are usually dry and windy. The maximum summer temperature is around 95° F, with winter low temperatures of 0 to -15° F. Although precipitation can be heavy during the summer months, the plains region typically sees low rainfall. The western edge of the plains, near the foothills of the mountains, experience more mild daily temperature changes, with lower summer temperatures and higher winter temperatures. This is also where most of the population resides.

Western Colorado's topography is less extreme than the Rocky Mountains, with lower elevations, and is made up of canyons and plateaus. Near the Utah border, the temperature is warmer. Compared to the Eastern Plains, western Colorado has colder but calmer and less variable winters. Temperatures can drop below zero, but most of the region receives abundant sunshine. Areas around Grand Junction have particularly mild weather and support extensive fruit growing. Summer high temperatures exceed 100° F at elevations below 5,500 feet while winter temperatures rarely drop below -10° F. Precipitation is more evenly distributed across seasons here than other parts of the state. Annual precipitation is only between 8 to 14 inches in the western valleys.

The average temperature within the state has increased by 2.9° since 1970, exacerbating issues such as low snowpack, water scarcity, drought and pest outbreaks. Warmer spring temperatures increase the speed of snowmelt, which can lead to flooding and erosion. Hotter summer temperatures compound drought stress on trees, making trees more susceptible to pest outbreaks, like the 2025 outbreak in Ponderosa pines from Mountain Pine Beetle. Higher temperatures in general increase tree death from stress, drought, heat and pests, putting additional pressure on Colorado's forests.

## Rivers and water resources

Colorado's annual precipitation generates approximately 14 million acre-feet (AF) of water, approximately 80% of which is produced from snow. Eighty to 90% of the state's population resides east of the Continental Divide, while 70 to 80% of the state's water occurs west of it. An average of 500,000 AF of water is diverted from the western slope to the eastern slope annually. (Colorado State Web Portal, 2015), making the majority of the population reliant on water transfers across counties and mountains and between river basins.

Colorado has more than 105,344 miles of rivers (Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment, 2019) with four major rivers originating within the state: the Colorado, South Platte, Arkansas and Rio Grande. More than 60% of Colorado’s water exits the state and flows downstream to 18 states and Mexico. Less than 5.3 million AF are consumed within the state annually, with approximately 83% supplied by surface water and 17% produced from groundwater. The percentage of statewide water delivery is broken down into the following water-use groups: 86.7% agriculture, 6.7% municipal and industrial, 5.5% recreational and environmental, and 1.1% self-supplied industrial (Colorado State

HUC 6 Basins of Colorado

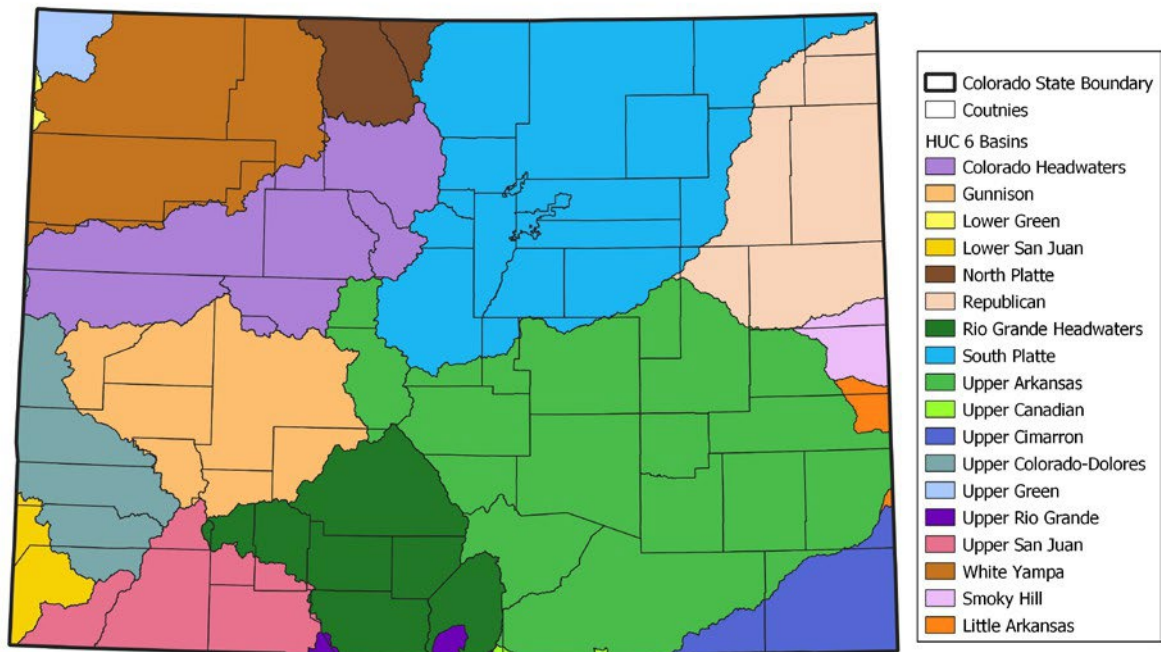


Figure 2: HUC 6 Basins of Colorado, USGS

University, 2020).

Increasing human population increases the demand for water. At the same time, climate change will likely result in Colorado receiving less precipitation, maintaining a lower snowpack, and experiencing more prolonged and intense droughts. As a result of more demand and less supply, conserving and recycling water will become more important, as will maintaining the health of the forests and upstream ecosystems which support these watersheds. Colorado’s forests support healthy water systems, modulating water quality and quantity, and appropriate management and conservation are essential to protecting

watershed health. CFLP supports the conservation and management of essential upstream forests, supporting the quality and quantity of essential watersheds across the state.

## Ecoregions

The physical environment of Colorado can be described and categorized using the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Ecoregion descriptions. The following paragraphs are taken from *Ecoregions of Colorado*, a collaborative project between state and federal agencies. The full report can be found in the appendix.

Ecoregions denote areas of general similarity in ecosystems and in the type, quality and quantity of environmental resources. There are six Level III ecoregions within Colorado: the Wyoming Basin, Colorado Plateau, Southern Rockies, Arizona/New Mexico Plateau, High Plains and the Southwestern Tablelands (Figure 4). The following descriptions are the U.S. Geological Survey definitions provided by the EPA.

The Wyoming Basin ecoregion is a broad intermontane basin dominated by relatively arid grasslands and shrublands, with high hills and low mountains. Restricted to the far north of Colorado, few forests are found in this ecoregion.

The Colorado Plateau ecoregion has a variety of geologic formations, including canyons, mesas, plateaus and mountains. The typical topography is rugged tableland, with extremely steep sidewalls marking abrupt changes in local relief of often 2,000 feet or more. The region also contains large low-lying areas, supporting heat- and dry-tolerant vegetation, such as salt brush and greasewood.

The Southern Rockies are composed of high elevation mountains, dominated by coniferous forests. Elevation highly influences vegetation and soil type. The lowest elevations are generally grass- or shrub-covered, low to middle elevations support a variety of vegetation types, and middle to high elevations are largely covered by coniferous forests. The region also includes the Colorado Mineral Belt, an area of ore deposits, ranging from the San Juan Mountains to the Colorado Front Range.

The Arizona/New Mexico Plateau represents a large transitional area between four ecoregions, located in the far south of the state. Known as the San Luis Valley, this relatively flat area feeds into the San Luis River. The precipitation within the San Luis Valley is the lowest in the state yet provides a valuable water supply due to the migration of runoff and groundwater to the low point at San Luis Lake. Here desert and wetlands exist side by side. The valley wetlands provide crucial migratory bird habitat.

The High Plains contain smooth to slightly irregular plains with vast grasslands. These are higher and drier than the Central Great Planes to the east. Depending on the location, the High Plains contain sagebrush, bluestem, buffalo grass and more. Much of this area has been disturbed by urbanization, mining or intensive grazing and crops.

The Southwestern Tablelands contain red-colored canyons, mesas, badlands and dissected river breaks. Much of this region is in sub-humid grassland and semiarid rangeland. The natural vegetation in the Colorado portion of this region is mostly grama-buffalo grass, with some juniper-scrub oak-grass savanna on escarpment bluffs.

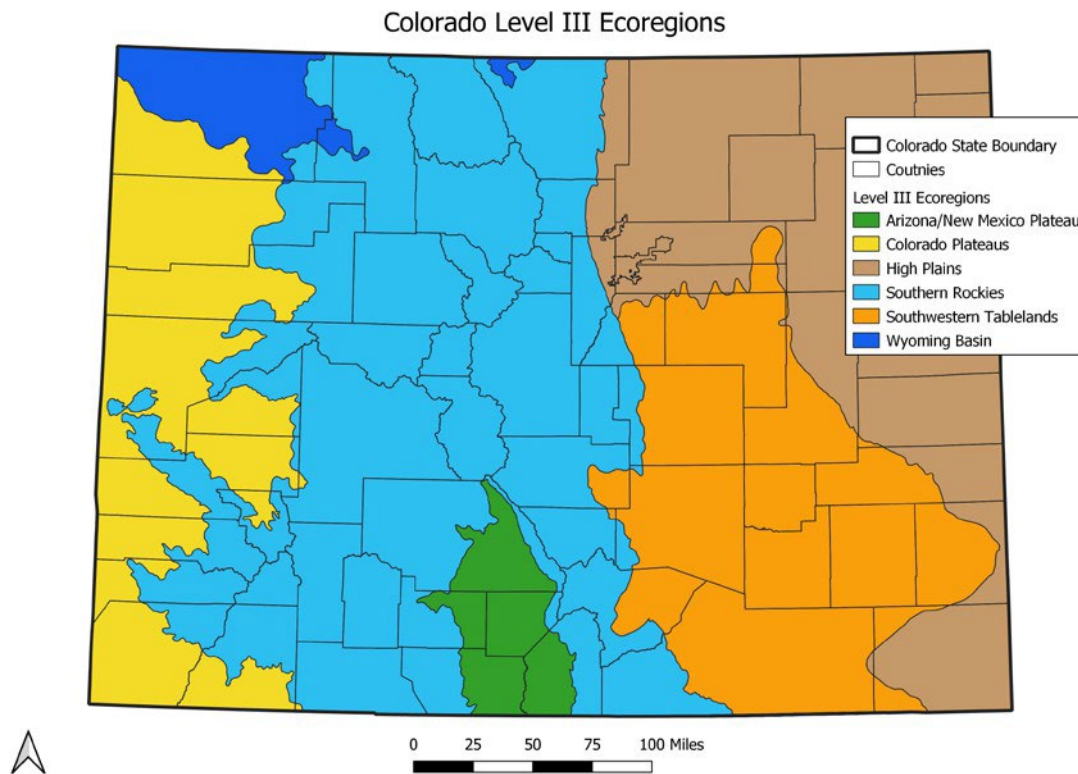


Figure 3: Level III Ecoregions of Colorado, EPA, Ecoregion Download Files by State - Region 8.

## Geology, topography and soils

Colorado can be divided into the three distinct geographical regions: the Great Plains in the east, the basins and plateaus in the west, and the Rocky Mountains in the middle. All this land rises well above sea level, with Colorado's lowest point at 3,350 feet where the Arkansas River flows into Kansas and the highest point at Mount Elbert at 14,433 feet.

All of Colorado's rivers flow away from the Continental Divide, the division of eastern and western North America formed by the Rockies. A major hydrographic feature, the Continental Divide directs water flow toward the Gulf of California on the western slope and toward the Gulf of Mexico on the eastern slope. Many rivers flow from Colorado,

including one of North America's longest rivers, the Colorado River, which drains from the western slopes, and whose watershed includes about one-third of the land area of Colorado. The North and South Platte, Arkansas and Rio Grande rivers all drain from the eastern slopes in an array of complicated drainage patterns.

The Colorado Rockies occupy an active geologic region that stressed and disrupted a weak crust about 30 million years ago, forming the current Rocky Mountains. Glacial erosion shaped many mountains and valleys, creating an ancient erosion surface residing on flat-lying sedimentary rocks in the high country. Several small glaciers remain tucked away in northern ranges. Landslides have deeply scarred mountainsides, and wind-formed sand dunes exist in several inter-montane valleys and the Eastern Plains. These weathering and erosional forces continually alter surface topography, slowly changing Colorado's geology over time.

Geologic features, combined with climate, topography, vegetation and animal activity, create complex patterns of soil distribution in Colorado. In general, Colorado soils differ from those from more humid regions by being lower in organic matter and higher in total plant nutrients. Colorado is home to many fossorial and den-producing mammal species that are distributed according to soil types (i.e., moles, ground squirrels and prairie dogs), and in turn, impact the soil through their activities.

In Colorado, forests provide many soil benefits, including reducing erosion and conserving soil productivity, which are supported by the implementation of the CFLP

## Agriculture

The eastern slope of the Rockies represents the center of agriculture and urban and industrial development in Colorado. Of the total land area making up the state (66.6 million acres), 16% is used as cropland (10.6 million acres) with about 2.6 million acres irrigated. While cropland acres in 2019 remained similar to 2010 acreage, total irrigated acres were reduced by 24%. (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2019).

As of 2020, farms and ranches made up 31.6 million acres of land in Colorado, with agriculture producing more than 25 products. Corn, sunflower and wheat are produced in the largest quantities. Colorado ranked in the top 10 in the nation for production of 15 crops including millet, barley, potatoes, onions and peaches. Colorado sheep, lambs and cattle are all third in production for the country. Colorado agricultural cash receipts for 2017 were \$6.8 billion, 68% from livestock products and 32% from crops (USDA, 2018).

## Mineral resources and mining

Colorado's mining industry began in 1859 after gold was discovered near Denver in the bed of Clear Creek. Since then, non-fuel mineral resource exploration and production rose to contribute over \$1801 billion in value to Colorado's economy (Colorado Geological Survey 2025). This industry derives direct and indirect benefits from mining significant amounts of gold, lead, gypsum, limestone, silver, molybdenum, uranium and zinc, as well as crushed stone, sand and gravel (Colorado Geological Survey, 2020).

## Recreation

Colorado's millions of acres of forests, grasslands and parks, attract around 92% of the state's residents to participate in outdoor recreation activities, contributing \$62.5 billion to the economy annually (State of Colorado, 2019). Colorado contains 58 mountain peaks exceeding 14,000 feet, (known as fourteeners) the most of any state in the U.S. Eleven national forests, four national parks, two national grasslands, eight national wildlife refuges, 42 state parks, various creeks and rivers, and numerous trails are used for backpacking, hiking, camping, boating, fishing, hunting, birding and other activities. During winter months, outdoor enthusiasts snowshoe, winter camp, ski and snowboard.

In addition to public park areas, there are 32 ski resorts available to the public, including such world-class resorts as Vail, Aspen and Steamboat. Many of these resorts also have areas for cross-country skiing. During spring and summer months, most ski resorts are open to golfers, hikers and mountain bikers.

The 485-mile Colorado Trail extends from Denver westward across the state to Durango; the trail passes through seven national forests, six wilderness areas, five major river systems and eight Colorado mountain ranges. The trail is open to hikers, horseback riders and, to some extent, mountain bikers (The Colorado Trail Foundation, 2020). Colorado contains 750 miles of the Continental Divide Trail, one of three national trails traversing the United States north to south.

Colorado's forests provide the backdrop to many of these recreational opportunities, and as such, the CFLP supports the conservation of forests which offer an unique and invaluable recreational resource.

## Forest definition, types and distributions

The CSFS uses the following definition of a forest, derived from the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program and the CSFS Forest Agricultural Program:

Forest land has at least 10% canopy cover of trees of any size or has had at least 10% canopy cover of trees in the past, based on the presence of stumps, snags or

other evidence and will be naturally or artificially regenerated. Additionally, the land is not subject to nonforest use(s) that prevent normal tree regeneration and succession, such as regular mowing, intensive grazing or recreation activities. Forest land includes transition zones, such as areas between heavily forested and nonforested lands that are at least 10% canopy cover with trees and forest areas adjacent to urban and built-up lands. Also included are piñon-juniper and chaparral areas in the West and afforested areas. The minimum area for classification of forest land is 1 acre (0.4 ha) in size and 120 feet (36.6 m) wide measured stem-to-stem from the outermost edge. Forest land includes roadside, streamside and shelterbelt strips of timber that have a crown width of at least 120 feet. Unimproved roads and trails, streams and clearings within forest areas are classified as forest if less than 120 feet wide.

More information can be found on the [USFS Definitions website](#).

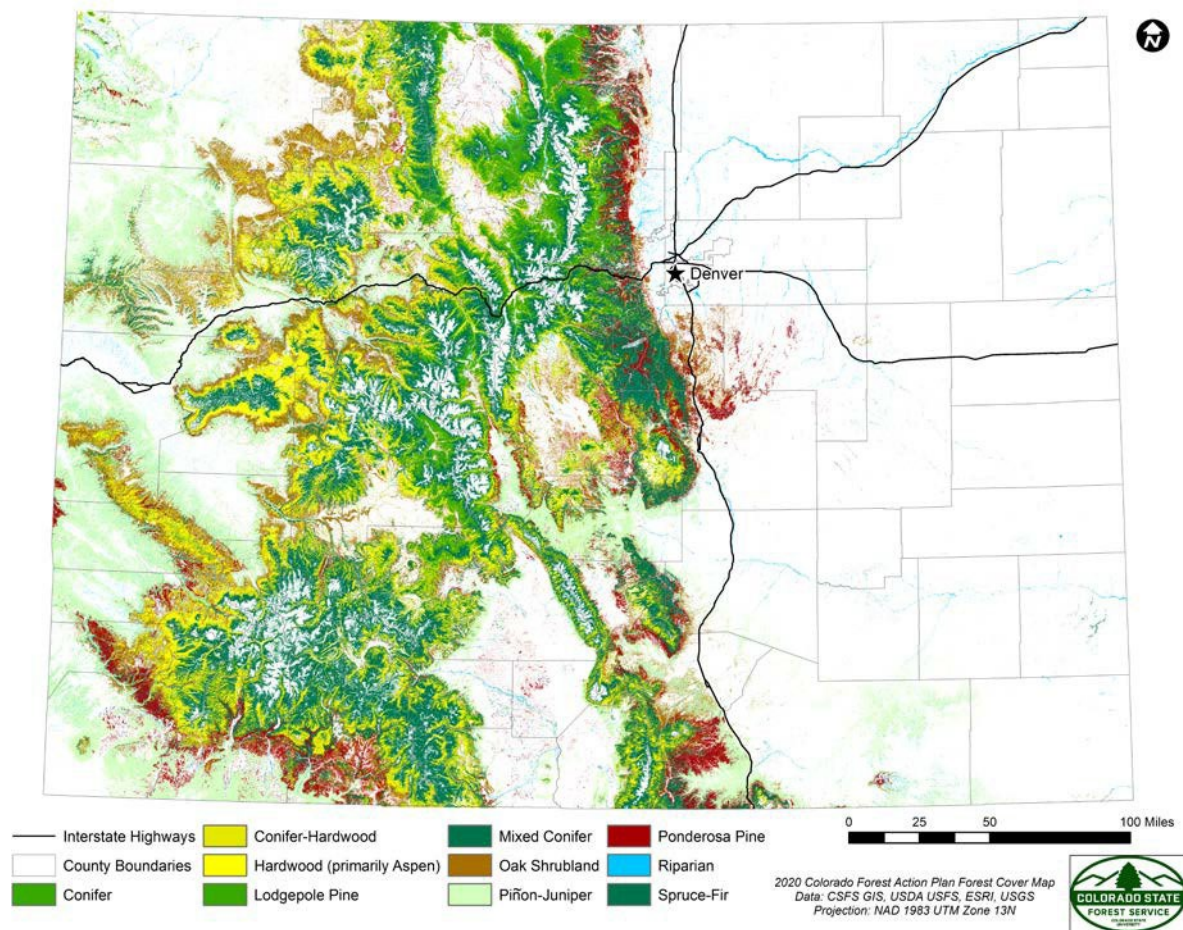


Figure 4: Forest Cover Types, Colorado State Forest Service 2020

The CSFS produced the following forest type and distribution descriptions in 2020. All forest types are important for water quality, aesthetics and recreation.

### Hardwood (primarily aspen)

- One of the most extensive forest types in Colorado, aspen forests cover a broad elevation range from approximately 6,900 to 10,500 feet above sea level.
- Approximately 33% of this forest cover type is on privately owned lands.
- Aspen forests have experienced die-off (e.g., sudden aspen decline) influenced by drought, warmer temperatures, aspect, elevation and age. In addition, fire suppression and browsing of young foliage are threats.
- Aspen forests provide critical habitat for a variety of wildlife species as well as wood stock for a variety of products.

## Piñon-juniper

- Another of the most extensive forest types in Colorado, piñon-juniper are primarily distributed on Colorado's Western Slope with some distribution in south-central Colorado and on the Eastern Plains. They span an elevation range of approximately 4,900 to 8,000 feet above sea level.
- Approximately 33% of this forest type is on privately owned lands.
- Uses of piñon-juniper forests include elk habitat, firewood, pine nuts and biomass for energy production.

## Spruce-fir

- Representing approximately 20% of Colorado's forests, this forest cover type occurs at an elevation range of 9,000 to 12,000 feet above sea level.
- Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir and other conifers are included in this forest type, with aspen also occurring.
- A variety of wildlife species uses this forest type as habitat including Canada lynx and boreal toads.
- Wood products include lumber and plywood.
- This forest type is critical for water supply due to winter snow capture and retention.

## Ponderosa pine

- Ponderosa pine forests represent approximately 10% of Colorado's forests, with almost half on privately owned land.
- Some of the wildlife species found in this forest type include the Pawnee montane skipper (a butterfly listed as threatened), northern goshawk and the American three-toed woodpecker.
- These forests comprise a significant portion of the wildland-urban interface (WUI).
- Threats include mountain pine beetle, fire exclusion and development. Fire exclusion has resulted in increased tree density, Douglas-fir encroachment and greater crown fire risk. There has been a significant mountain pine beetle outbreak in the last decade in this cover type.
- Ponderosa pine is milled for lumber and furniture.

## Oak forests and shrublands

- Oak forests and shrublands cover approximately 10% of Colorado, mostly in western Colorado, along with the southern Front Range and central Colorado.

- Almost 60% of this cover type is on private lands.
- Some of the wildlife species using this cover type include mule deer, elk, black bear, grouse and turkey.
- Fire plays a role in promoting regeneration, removing encroaching trees and promoting density and cover of gamble oak. Fire suppression has altered fire characteristics.

### Mixed conifer

- This forest type occurs between lower elevation ponderosa pine forests and higher elevation subalpine forests, and it contains a diverse mix of conifers including white fir, Douglas-fir, Rocky Mountain juniper, Engelmann spruce, blue spruce, subalpine fir, bristlecone pine and limber pine.
- Approximately 33% of the forest type is in private lands.
- Elk, northern goshawks and owls, among other species, use this forest type as habitat.
- Wildfire cycles vary considerably with historically low to mixed severity. Fire suppression contributes to denser forests, and the resulting denser forests contain more dead fuel, increasing the chances for crown fires and consequently threatening the water supply.
- This forest type provides a variety of wood products made from individual types of trees, such as lumber, firewood and more.

### Lodgepole pine

- This forest type occurs in relatively homogeneous stands at elevations like mixed-conifer forests.
- Approximately 10% of the acres are on private lands.
- Wildlife species using this forest type include mule deer, elk, black bears and Canada lynx.
- Wildfire played a key role in establishing lodgepole forests. Significant portions of these forests were impacted by a large epidemic of mountain pine beetle in the past decade. Ski areas and real estate development have contributed to WUI expansion in these forests.
- Varieties of wood products are derived from this forest cover type, including lumber, log furniture, decking, plywood and firewood.

### Riparian

- Consisting of montane and plains versions, these forest types provide critical habitat in the semi-arid climate of Colorado.

- Roughly 33% of montane acres are on private land while approximately 75% of plains acres are privately owned.
- Montane tree species include willow, alder and blue spruce, and they can occur in ponderosa pine, aspen and spruce-fir forest types. Plains riparian areas mostly comprise cottonwood and willow.
- Wildlife species in the montane forest type include numerous amphibians (including boreal toad), beaver, elk, mule deer and moose. In the plains forest type, wildlife include native fish, amphibians, bald eagles, deer, turkey and owls.
- Threats to riparian areas include reduced water levels and soil disturbance. These disturbances can promote invasion by tamarisk and Russian olive. Other threats can include pollution, surface water diversion and groundwater depletions.

## Conifer

- This forest type is characterized by an open woodland structure. In Colorado, this forest type is frequently found at higher elevations above ponderosa pine ecosystems in dry, rocky environments. Primary tree species include limber pine and bristlecone pine, and juniper may be mixed in the stands. Mountain mahogany is also present. At higher elevations, species such as Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir dominate in an open distribution.
- This forest type is variable regarding fire dependency due to sparse, rocky settings with limited fuels and tree density.
- Wildlife species dependent on this forest type are small mammals and birds, especially Clark's nutcracker, which depend on the pine seeds for food.

## Conifer-hardwood

- Occupying slopes and plateaus at mid-elevations characterize this forest type. Species mix is aspen along with a wide variety of trees such as Douglas-fir, white fir, subalpine fir, blue spruce, lodgepole pine, limber pine, ponderosa pine and oak shrub. These forests tend to be transitioning from aspen to conifers, depending on disturbance.
- It is considered a fire-adapted community with aspen resprouting post-fire.

## Forest products

While Colorado has millions of acres of forested land, the forestry industry does not contribute greatly to the state's gross product, although it may be regionally important. Colorado forest products include sawtimber, fuelwood, posts, poles and furniture wood.

Economically important species include aspen, spruce, fir, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine.

Forests in Colorado have relatively low productivity rates, so management is often focused on increasing forest health and decreasing risk of fire intensity and probability. CFPL supports land management goals including the improvement of forest health for multiple-use management, promotion of forestry-related projects and emphasis on local and state wood-product markets. Increasing the consumption of local wood products helps keep forests healthy by reducing the number of weak trees that are more prone to disease and infestation, as well as the reduction of woody biomass, which can lead to a reduction in the intensity of wildfire.

## Wildlife and fisheries

Colorado's forests provide critical fish and wildlife habitats, and the CFLP supports the conservation of these important forest ecosystems. In 2025, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) was in the process of updating the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), working closely with the Colorado National Heritage Program. Upon completion, this updated SWAP will be hosted online to provide up-to-date, easy access to information on Colorado's diverse plants, animals and ecologies. The paragraphs below were developed during the 2020 CSFS AON and are kept here for reference. Please refer to the CPW's latest SWAP for the most up to date information.

CPW has statutory authority over 960 native species, including mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks and crustaceans. Colorado is home to approximately 500 native vertebrate species of animals, including 124 mammals, 260 birds, 46 fish, 17 amphibians and 53 reptiles. Additionally, Colorado has 2,600 species of plants and 50,000 to 100,000 species of insects (Colorado Parks and Wildlife [CPW], 2015). Some of these have always been rare, but many have become imperiled by changes in their habitats caused by human impacts on resources (CPW, 2015).

CPW has developed a list of 159 species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) that comprises two tiers of species by need of conservation. Tier 1 identifies the species in greatest need of conservation interventions and consists of 55 species (13 mammals, 25 fish, 13 birds, two amphibians and two reptiles). Tier 2 identifies species that are in less danger, but still are in need of active conservation and consists of 104 species (23 mammals, two fish, 48 birds, eight amphibians, 14 reptiles and nine mollusks). Many fewer are listed as threatened, endangered or of special concern by the USFWS and the CPW: 19 birds, 13 mammals, 23 fish, 10 reptiles, seven amphibians and 16 plants (numbers are

estimates as they reflect decisions only on animals and plants for which population information exists) (CPW, 2015).

The native biological diversity of Colorado is supported by its relatively intact natural landscapes. Approximately 20% of Colorado's vertebrate species require conservation action(s) to survive. Of the at-risk categories of species, fish and amphibians have the highest percentage of at-risk taxa, at 43% and 41% respectively. These aquatic-dependent vertebrates are in the greatest need of conservation attention. The primary threats to fish include non-native species and water development, while amphibians are mostly threatened by disease and non-native species (CPW, 2015).

About 20% of Colorado mammals, birds and reptiles are at conservation risk. Direct mortality, urban expansion and energy development are the most significant threats to mammals. Colorado has 240 native breeding bird species, the largest of the vertebrate groups, of which 51 species are at risk, the highest number of vulnerable species among the animal categories. The biggest threat to birds includes habitat loss, often through conversion to housing or cropland, unsustainable forestry practices, energy development and wetland/riparian alteration. Threats to reptiles are invasive species and energy development. Good planning, education and adequate funding can protect and manage Colorado's unique biodiversity features and lower the number of at-risk species (CPW, 2015).

Protection of species is not only important for biodiversity, but also for Colorado's heritage, quality of life and economic prosperity (Ver Steeg, 2019). Hunting and fishing license sales support all of Colorado's wildlife management efforts, including threatened and endangered species programs, wildlife reintroductions and habitat conservation without placing additional burdens on taxpayers. Further, hunting and fishing contribute a significant amount to state and local economies, rivaling only the ski industry in total revenue generated (Colorado Wildlife Council, n.d.).

CPW's largest source of funding (54% or \$125 million) is through licenses, passes, fees and permits related to outdoor recreation. Excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment and firearms and ammunition along with license fees contribute 78% of all wildlife revenue (CPW, 2015). The boreal toad, cutthroat trout, bighorn sheep, black-footed ferrets, sage grouse, elk and bats are just a few examples of species that have benefited from conservation efforts (Colorado Wildlife Council, n.d.).

## Aesthetics and scenic resources

From snow-covered mountains to deep canyons and expansive prairies, Colorado offers visual wonders of every kind. Driving I-70 west from the Denver area brings views of the

impressive peaks and canyons of the Southern Rocky Mountains, highlighted by a diversity of forests. A short drive in any direction from Denver takes a visitor suddenly into a seemingly infinite land of topographical and forested marvels. Recreation opportunities are seemingly endless, whether the visitor wishes to visit a national park or hike in wilderness areas. The CFLP supports the conservation of these forested recreational and aesthetic scenic resources.

Within Colorado, 26 Scenic and Historic Byways, 11 of which are designated America's Byways, provide routes between historic sites and magnificent scenery (Colorado's Tourism, 2020). The state's diverse terrain can be viewed by following the sky-blue signs sporting the state flower, the columbine, and the words "Scenic Byway." Most byways travel through national forest land, offering easy access to many recreational.

Season changes in Colorado bring a striking array of colors. As mountains give up their persistent covering of snow, spring weather delivers colorful wildflowers and brilliant greens on an otherwise drab-brown country. Waterfowl, shorebirds and other viewable wildlife flood into areas of Colorado to breed and feed. As the fall approaches, quaking aspens turn gold, adding spectacular hues to mountainsides that can often be seen from roads and paths.

## Unique natural areas

Many Colorado forests provide habitat for rare and important plant and animal species and are sometimes themselves a valuable resource. Established in 1977, the Colorado Natural Areas Program (CNAP) is a statewide initiative focused on the recognition and protection of areas that contain at least one unique or high-quality natural feature of statewide significance, such as ecological community, geologic, paleontological, rare plant and rare fauna. Like CPW's SWAP, the CNAP constantly updates its information, providing essential science based data. The information below is maintained from the 2020 AON, but readers should refer to the CNAP for the most recent and accurate information.

CNAP has 95 designated State Natural Areas protecting more than 250 rare, threatened or endangered species or plant communities. The program contains 178,275 acres of significant land as well as 126 species of greatest conservation need (SGCN), designated by CPW (2017). These natural areas occur mostly in the mountains and western parts of the state. Because of the need for watershed conservation, many of these protected areas contain riparian systems, especially along major rivers.

Many important conservation areas exist among these selected natural areas. Owl Canyon in Larimer County includes 658 acres supporting a dense population of piñon pine at the northeastern extremity of its range in North America. Individual trees from these stands are

200 to 500 years old. Arapaho National Wildlife Refuge, located in an intermontane glacial basin south of Walden, was established in 1967 as a nesting and rearing stopover for waterfowl. Garden Park, located 8 miles north of Cañon City in south-central Colorado, harbors a rich diversity of vertebrate fossils. This natural area may be the most valuable Jurassic paleontological site in the world.

Other unique areas of Colorado include North America's highest dunes rising more than 750 feet against the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Great Sand Dunes National Park includes 30 square miles of dunes, alpine lakes and tundra, ancient spruce and pine forests, large stands of aspen and cottonwood, grasslands and wetlands (National Park Service [NPS], 2020).

Located in north-central Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park is a national icon with its rugged peaks and lush spruce and aspen forests. The Continental Divide runs north to south through the park. Carved by glaciers, Rocky Mountain National Park support diverse environments including montane, subalpine, alpine tundra and basins. The park is home to countless species of plants and animals, including elk, black bear, moose, coyote, bobcat and deer, and was visited by approximately 4.1 million people in 2024.

The Earth's oldest living organisms, the bristlecone pine, finds a home near tree line in the Colorado Rockies. With an average age of 1,000 years, bristlecone pine have been recorded at just under 5,000 years old, which makes it a resource worth protecting (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017). These pines sequester more carbon than any other species. The Colorado species of bristlecone pine can be found on Black Mountain in Pike National Forest, Mount Evans in Summit County and Mount Royal near Frisco. The oldest bristlecone in Colorado is approximately 2,500 years old (Walking Mountains, 2016).

## Urban influences

Perhaps the most recognized threat to private forested areas in the state is urban expansion. Residential and commercial developments are increasing within forested lands. Colorado's WUI is the area where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation. Based on the CSFS 2017 Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment, 2.9 million people live in the WUI. At that time, the WUI was estimated to cover roughly 3.4 million acres; one model projects this area could increase to roughly 9 million acres by 2040 (Theobald, 2015). Current data show counties with moderate to high increases in housing density lie mostly in areas along the Front Range of Colorado. As humans cause many of the major wildfires in Colorado, the potential for more frequent wildfires within the WUI seems clear as populations continue to grow.

# Forest Legacy Areas

The FLAs define where the proposed project must be located to qualify for participation in the FLP. Below is an overview of the process, followed by a description of each FLA.

## FLA creation

To participate in the federal FLP, Colorado had to define which areas were high priority for conservation, with an emphasis on protecting environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. These areas are called FLAs. To do this, Colorado first had to identify criteria to be used to define the FLAs. Public outreach, particularly focused on land conservation groups, was used to develop these criteria. Using data collected, an assessment was done to 1) establish project-specific criteria that incorporated input from land conservation professionals, and 2) establish FLA boundaries that are inclusive of privately owned forests with graphically definable and modifiable boundaries. The CSFS chose to accomplish this using two steps: Defining the criteria and performing data analysis.

## Defining criteria

In 2020, analysis criteria were modified from the previous AON based on input from Colorado land conservation groups.

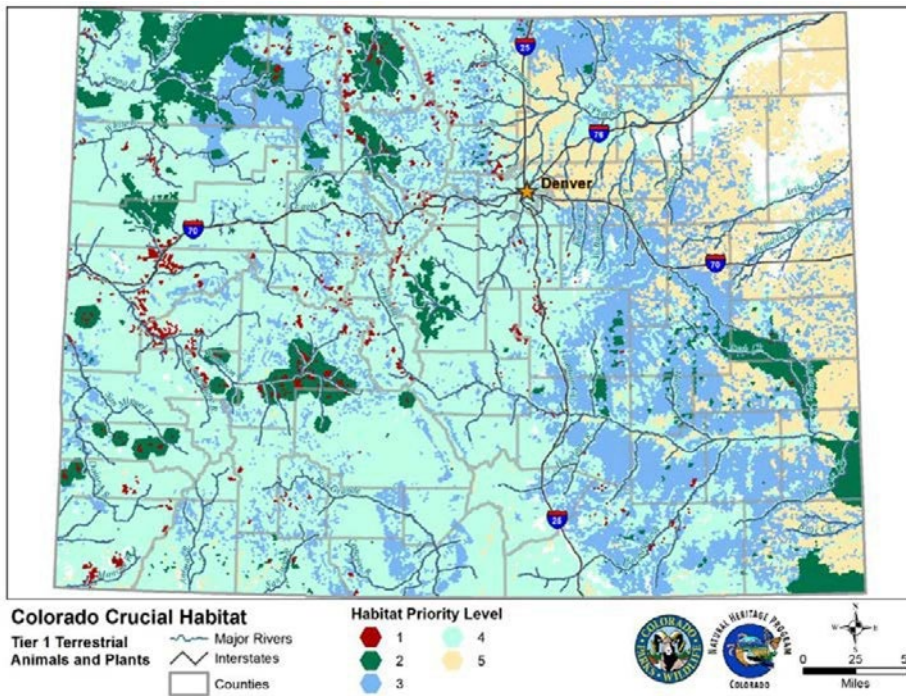
The following organizations were involved in updating the criteria and ranking: Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), The Conservation Fund (TCF), The Nature Conservancy (TNC),

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and CPW. Based on their input, the criteria used and their relative ranking were established (Table 1).

Criteria	Priority
Water Quality/Quantity	1
Wildlife Habitat	2
Growth/Sprawl Control	3
Large Continuous Forest	4
Wetland/Riparian Areas	5
Unique Ecological Areas	6
Wildfire Control Issues	7
Private Property Rights	8
Forest Timber Products	9
Lifestyle Protection for Landowner	10

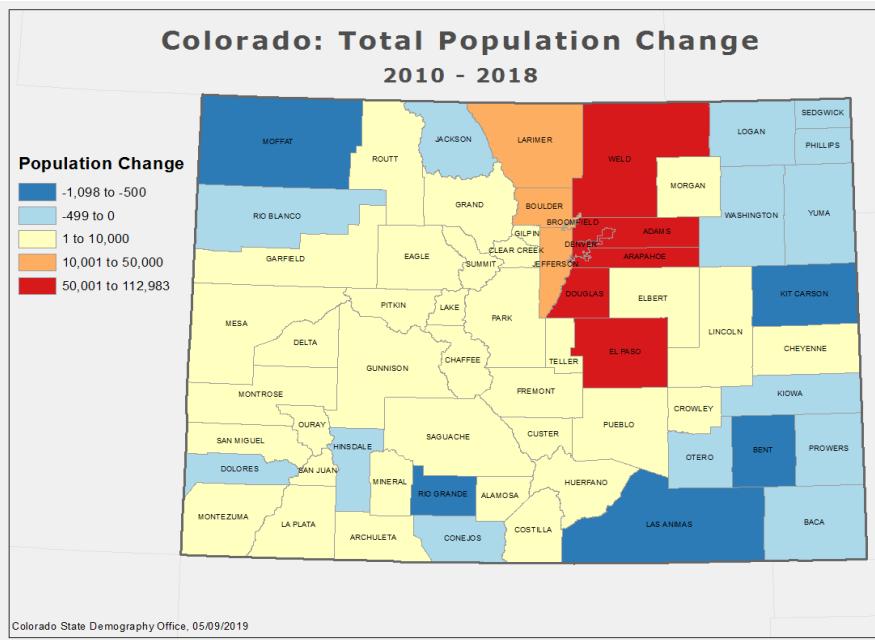
Using these criteria, GIS layers were developed, which were used in the creation of FLAs. The next section describes each criterion, along with a map depicting the dataset. The list shows the data used to define and evaluate each criterion. All of these data were collected in 2020.

1. **Water quality/quantity:** The National Forests to Faucets 2.0, 2019 Assessment is a geographic analysis done by the USFS that uses data to show importance of sub-watersheds for surface drinking water and to identify potential threats to those watersheds. Threats to these important forested watersheds include fire, insects and disease, development and reduced run-off due to a changing climate.
2. **Wildlife habitat:** Colorado’s 2015 SWAP by CPW includes several maps that relate to wildlife conservation in Colorado. The Colorado Crucial Habitat map depicts habitat for CPW Tier 1 SGCN.

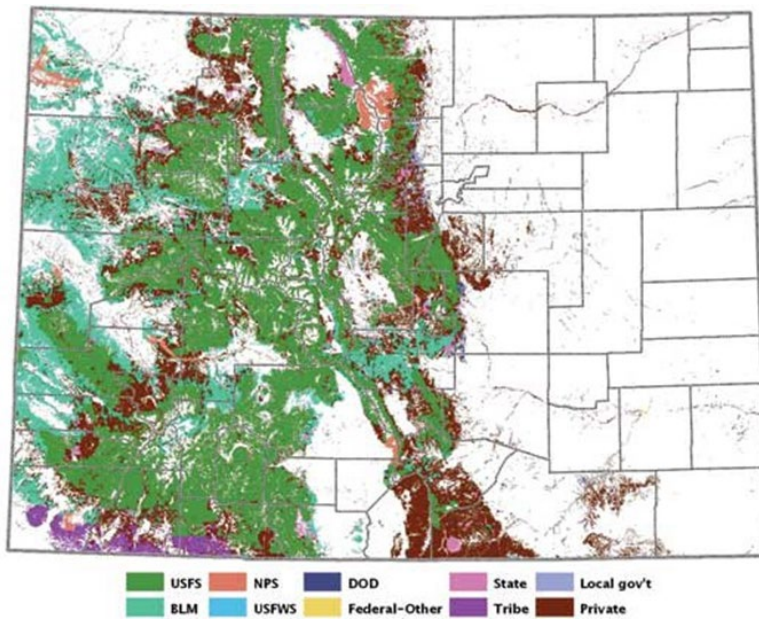


3. **Growth/sprawl control:** To illustrate the housing density pressure and population sprawl, the Colorado State Demography Office, total population change 2010 – 2018 by

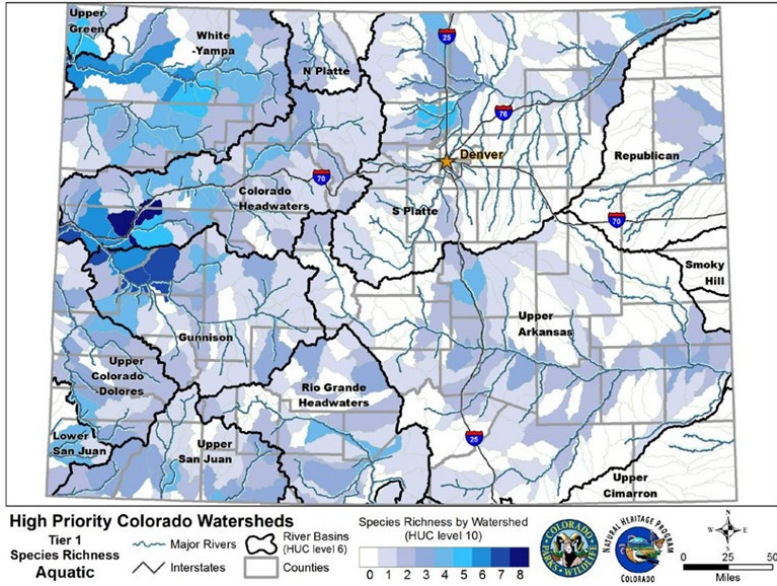
county map was used.



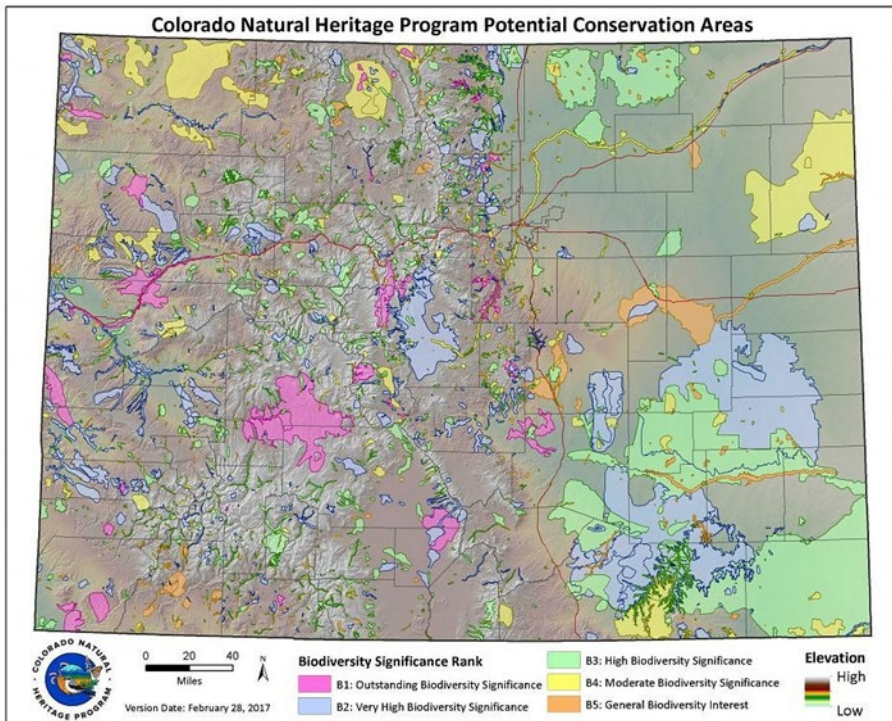
- Large continuous forest:** A forest ownership map by the CSFS was used. The map illustrates the forest ownership within Colorado, which includes federal (USFS, BLM, NPS, USFWS and DOD), state, tribe, local government and private.



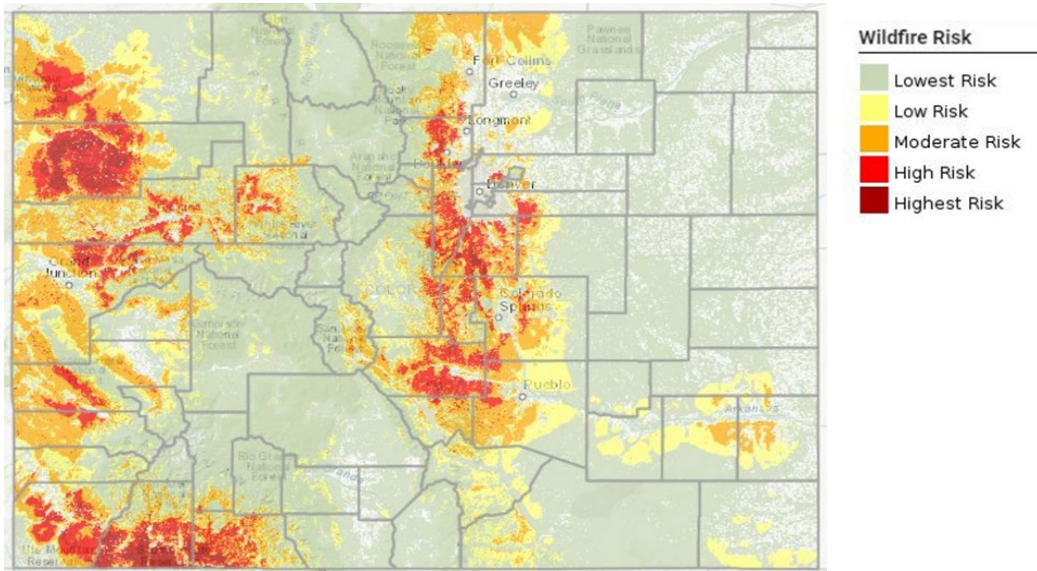
- Wetland/riparian areas:** The High Priority Colorado Watersheds map developed by CPW as part of the 2015 SWAP was used to represent significant wetland/riparian areas. The map shows the priority of watersheds (HUC 10) in relation to the Tier 1 SGCN species richness.



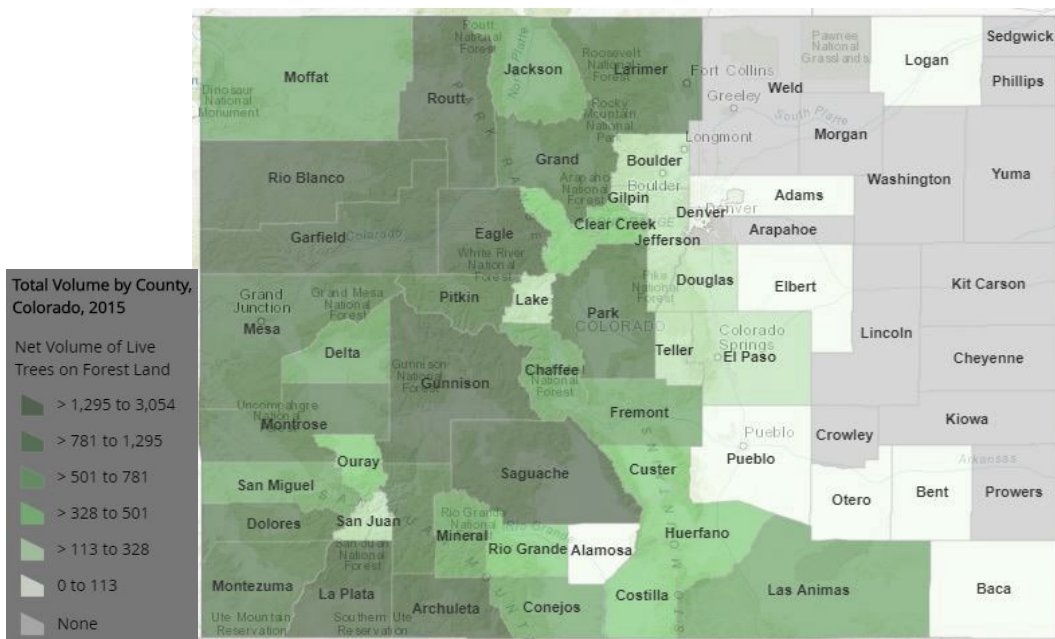
- Unique ecological areas:** The Colorado Natural Heritage Program produced the Potential Conservation Areas map, showing the biodiversity significance ranking by area.



7. **Wildfire control issues:** The Wildfire Risk map published by the CSFS identifies the areas with greatest potential impacts from a wildfire



8. **Forest timber products:** This data set came from the 2015 FIA program at the Rocky Mountain Research Station of the USFS. The volume of wood in a forest can be an important indicator of forest health, sustainability and structure. The map illustrates the total wood volume (cubic feet) per county.



**9. Lifestyle protection for landowners:** No data set could be identified that could represent lifestyle protection for landowners spatially. This value was not represented on the FLA map.

New data are available; however, updating the analysis was outside of the scope of the 2025 update.

### Performing analysis

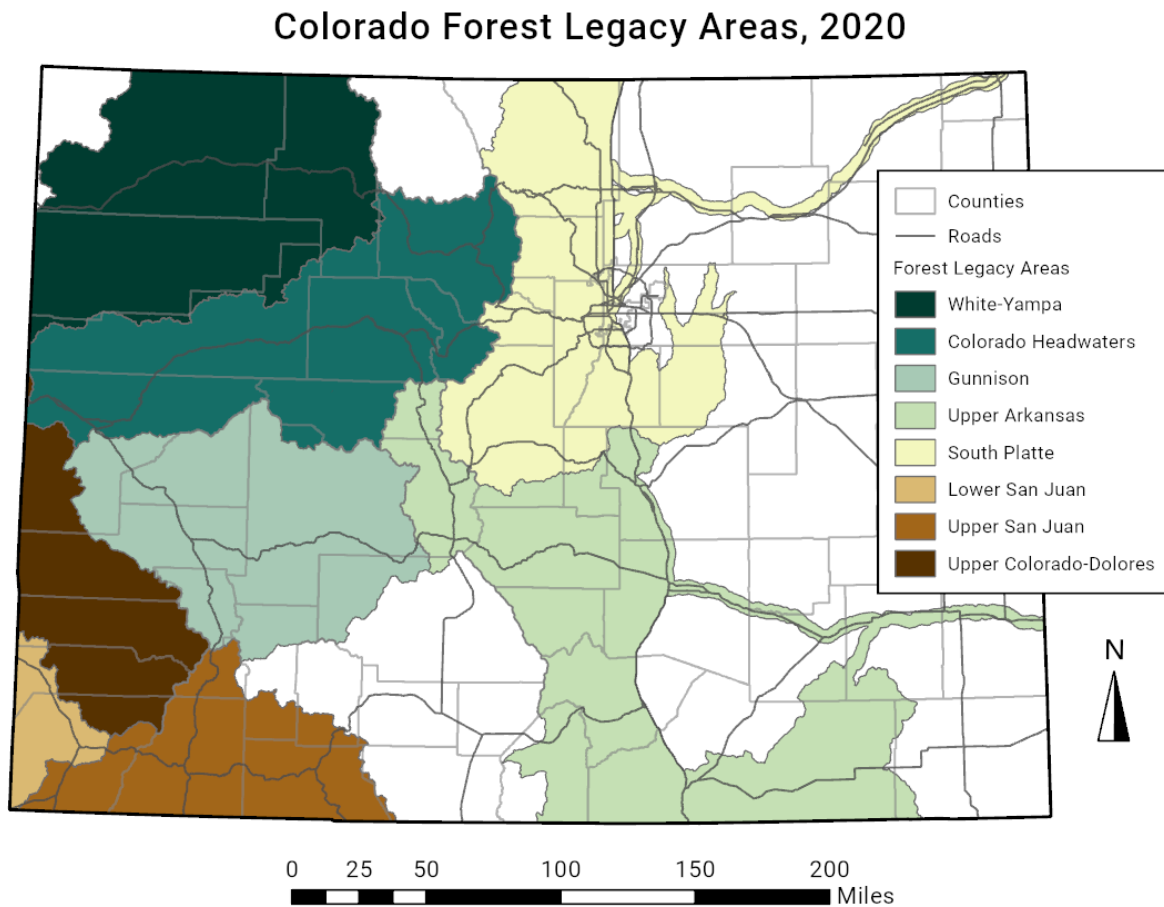
A 2020 update to Colorado’s original FLAs was required due to changing conditions over the last 20 years. The objectives of the 2020 update were to make sure the FLAs 1) included privately owned forests, 2) had definable boundaries and 3) had modifiable boundaries.

The first task was to identify Colorado’s private forests. This was completed by intersecting the privately owned land (2019 COMAP) GIS data and forest (2017 COWRAP) GIS data. The intersection of these two layers created a “private forest” layer. The inclusivity of this private forest layer was crucial to the composition of the 2020 FLAs.

The second and third objectives of the FLA updates were to have easily definable and modifiable boundaries. It was suggested that river basins (HUC 6s) be the foundation of the FLA boundaries as they are geographically depictable and encompass large areas. GIS shapefiles of hydrologic boundaries were downloaded from the USGS watershed boundary dataset. The basins were ranked according to the number of private forests contained within each and chosen based on those assessments as well as connectivity.

To eliminate zones that had little to no forest conservation potential, modifications to three of the basin boundaries (South Platte, Upper Arkansas and Upper San Juan) were made. These modifications used both political and geographical perimeters. Political features used to modify HUC 6 boundaries included county lines and roads, while geographical boundaries used to modify FLAs were watersheds (HUC 10s) and riparian buffers on major water features.

## Forest Legacy Area descriptions



The FLA descriptions incorporate surface land ownership data from CO Map 2019, chartered city and town populations from the U.S. Census Bureau (revised September 14, 2015), and population growth rate estimates from the Colorado State Demography Office (2020). Mountain peaks exceeding 14,000 feet are discussed within this section (Note: There are 58 fourteeners in Colorado, with a significant number of them occurring on basin boundaries). Of the 32 ski resorts in Colorado, 31 of them are located within the conglomerate of FLAs. Ski resort information was accessed from Uncover Colorado (Ripley, 2020).

Animal species discussed in each FLA characterization belong to one of two groups: 1) The state of Colorado's quintessential animals and 2) CPW Tier I listed species (CPW, 2015, Appendix A), which hold a federal status. Eleven animals fall into the first category, and 22 species are included in the second category. (Note: The bison was eliminated from group one due to there being only domestic populations within Colorado. Due to their extirpation

from the state, the wolverine and bonytail chub were eliminated from group two). The Level III and IV ecoregions listed for each FLA were determined with GIS data accessed from the EPA. Additional information for each Level IV ecoregion can be found on USGS' Characteristics of Level IV Ecoregions in Colorado (Appendix B). The eight areas outlined next in this document were identified as FLAs for the CFLP.

## Colorado Headwaters FLA

Area Coverage Description: The Colorado Headwaters Basin (140100) within Colorado forms the boundary of this FLA.

FLP conservation and protection goals for the Colorado Headwaters FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owners' rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

The population within this area is estimated to be 156,000 with a population density of 16 people per square mile, with a four-year population growth rate of 3.7%. The Colorado Headwaters FLA makes up approximately 9.4% (6.3 million acres) of the state and contains approximately 12% of Colorado's private forests (850,000 acres). The land ownership within this FLA is 28.5% (1.8 million acres) private, 24.5% (1.5 million acres) BLM, 43% (2.7 million acres) USFS, 1.9% (120,000 acres) NPS and 0.7% (40,000 acres) CPW. Counties in the Colorado Headwaters FLA include Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Mesa, Pitkin, Routt and Summit. Major cities in the region are Aspen, Glenwood Springs, Grand Junction, Rifle and Vail.

The Arapahoe, Grand Mesa, Routt and White River national forests occur in this region. Colorado State Parks within this FLA include Harvey Gap, Highline Lake, James M. Robb – Colorado River, Rifle Falls, Rifle Gap, Sylvan Lake and Vega. Ten fourteeners are found in this basin, with three of the peaks sharing a boundary with another FLA. With 15 ski resorts,

Colorado Headwaters FLA possesses the highest number of all the FLAs. Popular ski resorts within the region include Vail, Keystone, Breckenridge and Aspen.

Conservation organizations including, but not limited to, CCALT and Colorado Open Lands (COL) as well as other regional land trusts have recognized the unique nature of this FLA for private lands protection. These trusts have many forestlands already protected with conservation easements.

The protection of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. Much of this area is highly traveled through the I-70 corridor, and the forestlands around this corridor are heavily used by Colorado residents and tourists for recreational purposes. Protection of water resources along the Colorado River headwaters is imperative to the public as there are many large reservoirs and important water infrastructure features that are important to serve a growing population, increasing recreational uses and rising wildfire risk. Protection of forestlands in this FLA will ensure the scenic integrity of the area, which is highly sought after for recreational and tourism purposes. Wildlife habitat will remain intact, benefitting recreationalists.

There are 10 group one animals found within this FLA: Mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mountain goat, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule deer and white-tailed deer. Group two species that occur in the region include boreal toad, greater sage grouse, south white-tailed ptarmigan, American pica, little brown myotis, lynx, humpback chub and razorback sucker. The western yellow-billed cuckoo has possible occurrence within this area, making the count for group two species amount to nine.

Included within this basin is the Southern Rockies (21) and the Colorado Plateaus (20) Level III ecoregions. The Southern Rockies make up the eastern 75% of the FLA, with the Level IV Ecoregions being the alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mid-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f), volcanic subalpine forests (21g) and volcanic mid-elevation forests (21h). The Level IV ecoregions within the Colorado Plateaus include shale deserts and sedimentary basins (20b), semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c) and arid canyonlands (20d).

## Gunnison FLA

Area Coverage Description: The Gunnison River Basin (140200) forms the boundary of this FLA. Forest Legacy protection goals for the Gunnison FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat

3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

The approximate population within the Gunnison River Basin is 43,000, with a population density of five people per square mile, with a four-year population growth rate of 4.6%. The region makes up an estimated 7.7% (5.1 million acres) of the state and contains approximately 9.9% (700,000 acres) of Colorado's private forests. The land ownership within this FLA is 27.1% (1.4 million acres) private, 25.3% (1.3 million acres) BLM, 45.3% (2.3 million acres) USFS, 1.3% (70,000 acres) NPS and 0.7% (40,000 acres) CPW. Counties that occur within boundaries of this FLA include Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray, Saguache and San Juan. Major cities in this region are Delta, Gunnison and Montrose.

The Grand Mesa, Gunnison and Uncompahgre national forests occur in this region. State parks found within the basin include Crawford, Paonia, Ridgway and Sweitzer Lake. Nine fourteeners are found in this basin, with one of the peaks sharing a boundary with another FLA. There are five ski resorts within the Gunnison basin, including Crested Butte Mountain Resort. Conserving this FLA will provide benefits to the public, as Colorado's citizens value the areas and resources mentioned.

Other conservation organizations including but not limited to CPW, CCALT, COL and Gunnison Ranchland Conservation Legacy Trust. Funding for conservation of this area has been received from many organizations including Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The conservation organizations and funders recognize the unique nature of this FLA for private lands protection and have many forestlands already protected with conservation easements.

The protection of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. Much of this area is highly traveled from Montrose to Gunnison along Highway 50, and Montrose south through Ouray and Silverton, and the forestlands around these corridors are highly used by Colorado citizens and tourists from all parts of the nation for recreational

purposes. Protection of the water resources in the Gunnison River watershed is imperative to the public, as it ensures the scenic quality of the landscape.

Protection of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provides benefits to the public, as this FLA has habitat for nine of the Colorado's iconic animals including mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mountain goat, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, pronghorn and mule deer. Nine of the group two species inhabit this region, which consists of boreal toad, Gunnison sage grouse, south white-tailed ptarmigan, western yellow-billed cuckoo, American pika, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis, lynx and humpback chub.

Included within this basin is the Southern Rockies (21) and the Colorado Plateaus (20) Level III Ecoregions. The Level IV Ecoregions within the Southern Rockies of this FLA are the alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mi-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f), volcanic subalpine forests (21g), volcanic mid-elevation forests (21h), sagebrush parks (21i) and grassland parks (21j). The Level IV Ecoregions within the Colorado Plateaus include shale deserts and sedimentary basins (20b) and semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c).

## Lower San Juan FLA

Area Coverage Description: This FLA is comprised of the portion of the Lower San Juan River Basin (140802) that falls within the state of Colorado.

Forest Legacy protection goals for the Lower San Juan FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

This FLA contains an estimated 10,000 people and has a population density of nine people per square mile, with a four-year population growth rate of 2.4%. This is the smallest FLA,

covering an estimated 1.1% (750,000 acres) of the state and containing 1.2% (90,000 acres) of private forests within the state. The land ownership within this FLA is 52.6% (400,000 acres) private, 26.8% (200,000 acres) BLM, 0% (300 acres) USFS, 0.8% (6,000 acres) NPS, 0.3% (2,000 acres) CPW and 18.8% (150,000 acres) tribal. Counties included within the Lower San Juan are Dolores, Montezuma and San Miguel. The major city within the area is Cortez.

The Ute Mountain Ute Indian tribal lands occur in the southwest corner of the FLA. A very small part of the San Juan National Forest occurs within this region; however, it is such a small acreage that it comprises approximately only 0.03% of the area. No state parks are located within the FLA. There are no fourteeners or ski resorts within the Lower San Juan FLA. Other conservation organizations including but not limited to the Mesa County Land Trust and COL.

The protection of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. The area consists mainly of undeveloped stretches of forested lands around these corridors. The protection of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. This FLA consists of the forestlands to the east of Highway 491. Much of this area consists mainly of open areas, with limited development. Many tourists visit this area for the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Yucca House National Monument and Four Corners.

The conservation of the forestlands around these corridors will ensure that the public may continue to enjoy the scenic and open nature of the landscape. Protection of the water resources in the Dolores River watershed is imperative to the public, as it ensures the scenic quality of the landscape.

Protection of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provides benefits to the public, as this FLA has five group one animals that can be found here: Mountain lion, black bear, elk, bald eagle and mule deer. Eight animals belonging in the second category are Gunnison sage grouse, southwestern willow flycatcher, American pika, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis and Colorado pikeminnow. The group two species with possible occurrences within the FLA are the western yellow-billed cuckoo and New Mexico jumping mouse.

Most of this FLA falls within the Colorado Plateaus (20), with the other portion within the Southern Rockies (21). The level IV ecoregions included in the Plateaus (20) are Monticello-Cortez uplands and sagebrush valleys (20a), shale deserts and sedimentary basins (20b), semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c) and arid canyonlands (20d). The level IV ecoregion within the Rockies is sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f).

## South Platte FLA

Area Coverage Description: This FLA includes a portion of the South Platte River Basin (101900), within Colorado. The boundary of the FLA east of I-25 was formed by using a 2.5-mile buffer along the South Platte, St. Vrain, Cache la Poudre, Little Thompson and Big Thomson rivers. Additionally, watersheds (HUC 10s) that encompassed the Black Forest, east of I-25 were included. Because these watersheds extended further than the Black Forest, the shapes were cut at the north border of Elbert County.

Forest Legacy protection goals for the South Platte FLA:

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

Of the eight FLAs, the South Platte contains both the largest population and population density, at an estimated 2,000,000 people, and 212 people per square mile, respectively. The estimated four-year population growth rate of the South Platte FLA is 5.7%. This area covers approximately 9% (6 million acres) of Colorado and 13% (900,000 acres) of the private forests within the state. The land ownership within this FLA is 55.3% (3 million acres) private, 1% (60,000 acres) BLM, 29.5% (1.8 million acres) USFS, 2.9% (180,000 acres) NPS and 1.8% (110,000 acres) CPW. Counties included within this FLA include Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, El Paso, Elbert, Gilpin, Jefferson, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Park, Sedgwick, Teller, Washington and Weld. Major cities within this FLA are Boulder, Denver, Fort Collins, Greeley, Longmont and Sterling.

The Arapahoe, Pike, Roosevelt and a small portion of the San Isabel national forests occur in this region. South Platte contains 15 and the largest number of state parks of the other FLAs. Boyd Lake, Castlewood Canyon, Chatfield, Eldorado Canyon, Eleven Mile, Golden Gate Canyon, Jackson Lake, Lory, Mueller, Roxborough, Spinney Mountain, St. Vrain, State

Forest and Staunton State Parks occur in the South Platte FLA. Ten fourteeners are found in this region, with four of the peaks sharing a boundary with another FLA. Three ski resorts are in the South Platte FLA, including Loveland ski area.

Conservation organizations in the area include but are not limited to the CCALT, TPL, TNC and Ducks Unlimited. Funding for the conservation of this area has come from many funders, including GOCO.

The protection of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. This FLA consists of most of the northern Front Range of Colorado, on the west side of I-25. The South Platte River is quite prevalent in this FLA, as it extends to the eastern border of Colorado. The Big Thompson and Cache la Poudre rivers and their tributaries extend from the northern Colorado border, through Denver. As evidenced above, the population growth in this area of Colorado is significant. Many of the towns and communities along I-25 in this FLA are sprawling and continue to require water for traditional purposes such as ranching and forestry as well as for domestic uses for a growing population. Protecting the forestlands in this FLA will benefit the public, as it will keep water in use for traditional uses for private landowners and will also ensure water quality and quantity through forest health on private properties.

Protection of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provides benefits to the public as all eleven of the group one species (mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mountain goat, bald eagle, snow goose, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule deer and white-tailed deer) can be found within this FLA. Eight of the group two animals are expected to occur in the region, which include boreal toad, south white-tailed ptarmigan, American pika, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis, lynx, Preble's meadow jumping mouse and greenback cutthroat trout.

Most of the area falls within the Southern Rockies (21), west of I-25. The rest of the South Platte FLA lies in the High Plains (25) and Southwestern Tablelands (26). The alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mi-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f), volcanic subalpine forests (21g) and volcanic mid-elevation forests (21h) and grassland parks (21j), form the portion of the Rockies within this FLA. The Level IV Ecoregions within the plains (25) include the rolling sand plains (25b), moderate relief plains (25c), flat to rolling plains (25d) and the Front Range fans (25l). Pine-oak woodlands (26i) and foothill grasslands (26j) occur within the tablelands (26) and form part of the Black Forest.

## Upper Arkansas FLA

Area Coverage Description: Although this FLA mostly comprises of the Upper Arkansas River Basin (110200), it also contains portions of the Upper Cimarron (110400), Middle Arkansas (110300), Upper Canadian (110800), Upper Rio Grande (130201) and Rio Grande Headwaters (130100) river basins. The east portion of the Upper Arkansas basin was disconnected at I-25. The boundary of the FLA east of I-25 was formed by using a 2.5-mile buffer along the Arkansas River, Purgatoire River and Fountain Creek and watersheds (HUC 10s) to include plains riparian forests. Watersheds within the east portion of the Rio Grande Headwaters basin (in Costilla County) were incorporated in the FLA to include forests west of the Upper Arkansas basin. Because the selected watershed extended into non-forest land, the shapes were excluded at Colorado 159 and 4th Avenue (in Costilla County).

Forest Legacy protection goals for the Upper Arkansas FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

The Upper Arkansas contains approximately 622,000 people and has an approximate population density of 49 people per square mile, with a four-year population growth rate of 5.7%. This area covers approximately 12.1% (8 million acres) of Colorado and 29.1% (2 million acres) of the private forests within the state, being the largest and containing the greatest amount of forest of the FLAs. The land ownership within this area is 67% (5.4 million acres) private, 6.9% (560,000 acres) BLM, 17% (1.4 million acres) USFS, 0% (900 acres) NPS and 0.9% (70,000 acres) CPW. Counties that occur in the Upper Arkansas include Baca, Bent, Chaffee, Costilla, Crowley, Custer, El Paso, Fremont, Huerfano, Lake, Las Animas, Otero, Park, Prowers, Pueblo, Saguache and Teller. The major cities found in this FLA are Canon City, Colorado Springs, La Junta, Pueblo and Salida.

The Pike and San Isabel national forests and the Comanche National Grassland occur in this region. The Upper Arkansas contains six state parks: Cheyenne Mountain, John Martin Reservoir, Lake Pueblo, Lathrop, Mueller and Trinidad Lake. With the highest number of any of the FLAs, this region contains 24 fourteeners, two of which share a boundary with another FLA. The five tallest fourteeners (Mount Elbert, Mount Massive, Mount Harvard, Blanca Peak and La Plata Peak) are in this region. Monarch Mountain is the sole ski resort located within the Upper Arkansas FLA.

Conservation organizations in the FLA include but are not limited to CCALT, TPL, TNC, CPW and the Palmer Land Trust. Funders for this area include but are not limited to TNC and GOCO.

The conservation of the forestlands in this FLA has numerous benefits to the public. This FLA consists of most of the southern Front Range of Colorado, on the west side of I-25 as well as large swaths of private forested lands on the west side of I-25, on the Colorado/New Mexico border and the riparian corridor around the Purgatoire River that extends to the eastern Colorado border. The Arkansas, Apishapa and Purgatoire rivers are quite prevalent in this FLA. As evidenced above, the population growth in this area of Colorado is significant. Many of the towns and communities along I-25 in this FLA, including Colorado Springs, are sprawling and continue to require water being used for traditional purposes such as ranching and forestry and for being used for domestic uses for a growing population. Protecting the forestlands in this FLA will benefit the public, as it will keep water in use for traditional uses for private landowners and will also ensure water quality and quantity through forest health on private properties. Maintaining the scenic quality of the open forested landscapes in this FLA is of benefit to the public driving through the I-25 south corridor and those recreationalists who use this area.

Protection of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provides benefits to the public as all eleven of the group one species (mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mountain goat, bald eagle, snow goose, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule deer and white-tailed deer) can be found within this FLA. Fifteen of the group two animals, and the highest number of all the FLAs, are expected to occur in the region: boreal toad, lesser prairie chicken, south white-tailed ptarmigan, American pica, black-footed ferret, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis, lynx, New Mexico jumping mouse, Preble's meadow jumping mouse, Colorado checkered whiptail, Mississauga, Arkansas darter, greenback cutthroat trout and Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

With the greatest environmental diversity of the FLAs, the Upper Arkansas encompasses four Level III Ecoregions: Southern Rockies (21), Arizona/New Mexico Plateau (22), High Plains (25) and Southwestern Tablelands (26). The Level IV ecoregions within the region

include alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mid-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f), volcanic subalpine forests (21g), volcanic mid-elevation forests (21h), sagebrush parks (21i), grassland parks (21j), San Luis shrublands and hills (22a), San Luis alluvial flats and wetlands (22b), rolling sand plains (25b), flat to rolling plains (25d), piedmont plains and tablelands (26e), mesa de Maya/Black mesa (26f), Purgatoire hills and canyons (26g), piñon-juniper woodlands and savannas (26h), pine-oak woodlands (26i) and foothill grasslands (26j) and sand sheets (26k).

## Upper Colorado-Dolores FLA

Area Coverage Description: The part of the Upper Colorado-Dolores river basin (140300) that falls within the state of Colorado comprises this FLA.

Forest Legacy protection goals for the Upper Colorado-Dolores FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

There is an estimated population of 5,400 and a population density of approximately one person per square mile within the Upper Colorado-Dolores, with a four-year population growth rate of 3.5%. This area covers approximately 4.2% (2.8 million acres) of the state and contains approximately 5.9% (400,000 acres) of private forests. The land ownership within this FLA is 24.8% (700,000 acres) private, 36.8% (1 million acres) BLM, 36.1% (1 million acres) USFS, 0% NPS and 1.1% (30,000 acres) CPW. Counties within the Upper Colorado- Dolores include Dolores, Mesa, Montezuma, Montrose and San Miguel. The major city within this area is Telluride.

The Grand Mesa, Manti-La Sal, San Juan and Uncompahgre national forests occur in this region. One state park, Lone Mesa, is in the Upper Colorado-Dolores FLA. Three

fourteeners are found in this area. Telluride ski resort is in this region. The conservation of this property provides benefits to the public who recreate in these areas.

This FLA consists of the forestlands to the west of Highways 50 and 550 and includes many highly traveled areas for tourism and recreation. The Uncompahgre Plateau is a notable feature in this area. The Dolores River runs through the FLA, and the forestlands directly around the river ensure water quality and quantity for timber and agricultural operations in the area. The Gunnison River runs through the northern part of this FLA.

Present conservation organizations include but are not limited to the Mesa Land Trust. Funding for the conservation of this area has come from many funders, including GOCO.

Protecting the wildlife habitat in this FLA provides benefits to the public. Colorado's classic species that are found in this region include mountain lion, black bear, elk, mountain goat, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, pronghorn and mule deer. Seven animals, and the lowest number of animals in group two, are within this FLA. These species include the Gunnison sage grouse, south white-tailed ptarmigan, southwestern willow flycatcher, American pica, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis and lynx.

The Colorado Plateaus (20) and the Southern Rockies (21) comprise this FLA. Monticello-Cortez uplands and sagebrush valleys (20a), shale deserts and sedimentary basins (20b), semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c) and arid canyonlands (20d) lie within the Plateaus (20). The Level IV ecoregions within the Southern Rockies (21) are alpine zone (21a), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e) and sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f).

## Upper San Juan FLA

Area Coverage Description: This FLA includes the Upper San Juan River Basin (140801) within the state of Colorado. Additionally, the southeast portion of the FLA incorporates the Upper Rio Grande (130201), to encompass private forests on the eastern edge of Archuleta County.

Forest Legacy protection goals for the Upper San Juan FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas

7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

The approximate population within this FLA is 31,000, and the population density is seven people per square mile, with a four-year population growth rate of 3.6%. The Upper San Juan FLA covers an estimated 4.5% (3 million acres) of the state and 7.3% (500,000 acres) of private forests. The land ownership within this region is 28.1% (850,000 acres) private, 3.2% (95,000 acres) BLM, 45% (1.4 million acres) USFS, 1.6% (50,000 acres) NPS, 0.4% (10,000 acres) CPW and 20.9% (600,000 acres) tribal. Archuleta, Hinsdale, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma and San Juan counties are in the region. Durango is the major city occurring within the area.

The San Juan and Rio Grande national forests can be found in this FLA. The Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribal Lands and the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Lands occur in the southwest and southeast portions of the region, respectively. The Mancos and Navajo state parks are in the Upper San Juan. There are four fourteeners in this area. Four ski resorts are in this region, including the Silverton Mountain ski area. Conserving this FLA will provide benefits to the public, as Colorado's residents value the resources mentioned.

Conservation of this FLA provides benefits to the public. This FLA consists of the forestlands to the east of Durango, up to Silverton and east past the town of Pagosa Springs. The Navajo Reservoir and the San Juan River and its many tributaries are notable features of the landscape that are largely undeveloped. Recreation and tourism are important to the economy of this area, notably around Pagosa Springs and Silverton.

Conservation organizations including, but not limited to, the CCALT, COL, TCF and TPL have been involved in closing conservation transactions in this area.

Conservation of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provide benefits to the public. Group one animals with ranges in this FLA include mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, mountain goat, bald eagle, bighorn sheep and mule deer. Nine of the group two species inhabit this region: South white-tailed ptarmigan, southwestern willow flycatcher, western yellow-billed cuckoo possible occurrence, American pica, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis, lynx, New Mexico jumping mouse and Colorado pikeminnow.

The Colorado Plateaus (20) and Southern Rockies (21) Level III Ecoregions are identified within the Upper San Juan. Monticello-Cortez uplands and sagebrush valleys (20a), shale

deserts and sedimentary basins (20b), semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c) and arid canyonlands (20d) are within the plateaus (20) of the area. The Level IV Ecoregions within the Southern Rockies include the alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mi-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f) and volcanic subalpine forests (21g).

## White Yampa FLA

Area Coverage Description: This FLA includes the White Yampa River Basin (140500), within the Colorado state borders.

Forest Legacy protection goals for the White Yampa FLA

1. Protection of water quality and production amounts
2. Protection of significant wildlife habitat
3. Reduction of forested land fragmentation because of development pressures, subdivision and increasing housing density
4. Maintaining continuity of forested lands adjacent to protected lands
5. Protection of significant riparian communities
6. Protection of unique ecological areas
7. Reduction of risk and occurrence of wildfires especially in developed areas or ecologically sensitive areas
8. Protection of private property owner's rights.
9. Protection of economically significant timber forest products through positive forest stewardship programs
10. Protection of lifestyle for property owners

With an estimated population of 28,000, a population density of 3 people per square mile and a four-year population growth rate of 3.5%, this FLA makes up approximately 9.3% (6.2 million acres) of the state and contains approximately 12% (850,000 acres) of Colorado's private forests. The land ownership within this FLA is 37.5% (2.3 million acres) private, 38.3% (2.4 million acres) BLM, 17.9% (1.1 million acres) USFS, 1.7% (10,000 acres) NPS and 1% (64,000 acres) CPW. The counties within the White-Yampa include Garfield, Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt. Major cities found within this area are Craig and Steamboat Springs.

The Routt and White River national forests occur in this region. The Elkhead Reservoir, Pearl Lake, Stagecoach, Steamboat Lake and Yampa River state parks are within the FLA. There are no fourteeners located in this FLA. Two ski resorts, including Steamboat, are located in the White-Yampa region. Conserving this FLA will provide benefits to the public, as Colorado's residents value the resources mentioned.

Conservation of this FLA provides benefits to the public. The White River, the Yampa River and the Little Snake River are notable features of the landscape and are largely undeveloped in this rural FLA. The Roan Plateau is another notable feature of this FLA. Recreation and tourism is important to the economy of this area, notably around Steamboat Springs, Meeker and Craig. Portions of this FLA are visible to the public from I-70 and other major regional highways and roads, and conservation of the area ensures the scenic nature of the area.

Conservation organizations in the FLA include but are not limited to the CCALT, COL, TNC, the Yampa Valley Land Trust, CPW, NRCS and GOCO.

Conservation of the wildlife habitat in this FLA provide benefits to the public. Within group one, the mountain lion, black bear, elk, moose, bald eagle, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, mule deer and white-tailed deer can be found within this FLA. Nine of the group two animals are expected to occur in the region, which includes boreal toad, greater sage grouse, south white-tailed ptarmigan, western yellow-billed cuckoo, American pika, Gunnison's prairie dog, little brown myotis, lynx, Colorado pike minnow and humpback chub.

Included within this FLA is the Wyoming Basin (18), Colorado Plateaus (20) Southern Rockies (21). The Level IV Ecoregions within the Wyoming Basin include rolling sagebrush steppe (18a), foothill shrublands and low mountains (18d) and salt desert shrub basins (18e). The shale deserts and sedimentary basins (20b), semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (20c), escarpments (20e) and Uinta basin floor (20f) are found within the plateaus (20). The Level IV Ecoregions included in that part of the Southern Rockies (21) are the alpine zone (21a), crystalline subalpine forests (21b), crystalline mi-elevation forests (21c), foothill shrublands (21d), sedimentary subalpine forests (21e), sedimentary mid-elevation forests (21f) and volcanic subalpine forests (21g).

## Forest Legacy Program management

FLP implementation is guided by the USFS Forest Legacy Implementation Guidelines, along with Colorado laws and policies, CFAP and this Assessment of Need. The CSFS is the lead agency for the CFLP and administers the program. This section provides guidance on which lands qualify, project selection criteria, application and evaluation overview, and other similar details.

### Forest legacy program project selection process

Project proposals will be identified through a periodic request process managed by the CSFS FLP specialist. The SFSCC will support this process.

Only eligible lands may apply to the CFLP. Eligibility criteria are listed in the following section. Land eligibility will be determined by the CSFS, based on these criteria, and in consultation with the SFSCC as necessary.

Once determined eligible, projects are welcome to apply to Colorado's FLP. The Colorado FLP specialist will review the project and may choose to refer it to the SFSCC. If referred, the SFSCC will review the proposal and provide a recommendation on whether the project should be referred to the regional and federal competitive processes. In the case of multiple projects, the SFSCC will provide a relative rank for each project. There is a limit on the number and value of projects that Colorado may submit to the federal level. If the number or value of the projects submitted to the state exceeds what is allowed to be submitted federally, the CSFS, in consultation with the SFSCC will choose which projects to move forward.

The basic components of project solicitation include 1) public announcement, 2) CSFS project assessment(s) according to stated criteria, 3) recommendation/approval of ranked project list by the Colorado State Forester and 4) submission of project(s) to USFS for the competitive grant program.

### Eligibility criteria

Projects must answer "yes" to each of eligibility criteria listed below to qualify for the FLP. Projects that do not meet eligibility will be disqualified.

Is the property within, or partially within, a designated <a href="#">Forest Legacy Area</a> ?
Is the property privately owned or is the land held in trust by the State Land Board?

Is the landowner a willing and voluntary seller?
Is the property at least 75% forested or can be within 10 years?
Has the landowner met with the CSFS FLP specialist to discuss the program?

## Assessment criteria

Each proposal submitted to the state will be assessed based on the extent to which they address the criteria outlined below. No relative importis implied by the order in which the criteria are listed below.

## Project readiness criteria

The criteria below are used to assess project readiness. Projects with higher readiness show more complete preparation, with higher likelihood to complete within a two year time frame. Projects which meet more of the criteria will be assessed higher.

- Easement and deed language completed
  - Conservation easements: Draft conservation easement agreed to by Project Applicant and the CSFS
  - For fee simple acquisition: Draft deed language agreed to by the future landowner and the CSFS
- Completed title search with encumbrances identified
- Mineral rights holders identified. If mineral rights are severed, mineral assessment and determination of remoteness completed.
- Signed purchase option/agreement between landowner and the CSFS or between landowner and project partner, at the request of the CSFS
- 25% non-federal grant match secured

## Project Forest Action Plan goals criteria

Projects that meet the goals outlined in Colorado’s FAP are assessed higher. The goals are listed here, followed by criteria that may be used to assess how well the project meets the FAP goals. The CSFS may use the recommended criteria found within this AON or may develop different criteria that would better ensure that projects meet the Colorado’s FAP goals. In all cases, the CSFS will publish the scoring criteria for the FAP with the application.

### Colorado State Forest Action Plan Goals

Theme	Goals
Forest conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep forests as forests</li> <li>• Improve forest productivity</li> <li>• Promote adaptive management</li> </ul>
Living with wildfire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote community fire adaptation</li> <li>• Reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire</li> <li>• Promote the role of fire in ecological processes</li> </ul>
Watershed protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and maintain water quality and quantity</li> <li>• Improve resiliency of critical water infrastructure</li> <li>• Sustain or restore fundamental ecological functions for watershed health</li> </ul>
Forest wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve, enhance and protect critical habitat</li> <li>• Integrate habitat considerations into forestry activities</li> <li>• Increase public understanding of the connections between forestry and habitat</li> </ul>
Forest products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and develop more resilient industry capacity required to meet forest management needs</li> <li>• Increase the number of forest acres treated annual through cost offsets of increased utilization</li> </ul>

### Recommended Colorado Forest Action Plan goal-based criteria

These criteria are divided into four sections, Importance, Threat, Strategic and Partnership. Each section contains specific criteria which highlight how the project meets the goals of the CFAP. Projects will be assessed based on how well the proposal meets the criteria. For each section, projects should include all criteria relevant to the project. More detailed recommendations for assessing criteria can be found in the appendix.

#### Importance

This section focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, economic and public benefits gained from the conservation and management of the property and its

resources now and into the future. Criteria for assessing importance include how the project addresses these factors:

- Economic benefits from timber and potential forest productivity
- Economic benefits from non-timber products and recreation
- Threatened or endangered species habitat
- Fish, wildlife, plants and unique forest communities
- Water supply, aquatic habitat and watershed protection
- Cultural and/or historic benefits
- Benefits to tribal and/or local communities
- Increased public access
- Protection of scenic views
- Carbon sequestration/climate resilience, adaption to climate change

### **Threat**

This section focuses on how likely it is that the property will be converted from a forest to a non-forest use. Threat specifically focuses on the larger forces acting on the property, such as development potential, renewable energy potential, sale of nearby properties, landowner circumstances, etc. Criteria for assessing threat include how the property is threatened with conversion to non-forest land.

- Lack of protection
- Land and landowners circumstances
- Adjacent land use
- Ability to develop
- Other specific threats of forest conversion to non-forest uses

### **Strategic**

This section reflects the project's relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective considering scale, location and relative contribution to landscape scale conservation goals. Criteria for assessing strategic include how the project does the following:

- Contributes to larger conservation initiatives, strategies or plans
- Complements protected lands
- Benefits local communities
- Provides other landscape-scale goals and public benefits

## Program administration

The CSFS will be entirely responsible for the enrollment of projects in the FLP and administration of land and/or easement acquisition. Conservation easements and fee simple acquisitions purchased through Colorado's FLP are held in trust by the Board of Governors of the Colorado State University System and administered by the CSFS. At the discretion of the CSFS, other Colorado state or local governments may also hold lands acquired through fee simple acquisitions if a partnership is established between the agency and the CSFS through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA).

Prior to a project closing, each project must create an MRMP. After project closing, this MRMP must be reviewed and updated every 10 years. To meet the FLP guidelines and qualify under the FLP program, the MRMP meet these requirements:

1. Meet the criteria set out by the USFS FLP Implementation Guidelines
2. Support the goals and objectives set out within the FLP application and the recorded deed or conservation easement
3. Be reviewed and approved by the CSFS upon creation and at least every 10 years. The CSFS has the final and highest authority to approve or disapprove the plan.
4. All other plans impacting the project site must be integrated into the MRMP, or held subject to the MRMP.

Annually, the CSFS will conduct inspections on all properties enrolled in the CFLP and provide reports to the USFS.

# Appendix

## Special Case Land Eligibility: Colorado State Land Board Trust Lands

For the purposes of eligibility for CFLP, land must be privately held or held in trust by the Colorado State Land Board (SLB). The CSFS considers trust land held by the CSLB to be equivalent to privately held land as it is distinct in definition, function and management from public land.

In 1896 the Colorado Constitution established the CSLB to produce reasonable and consistent income over time and to provide sound stewardship of state trust assets. This organization manages the \$4.1 billion endowment for the benefit of public schools, in part by leasing 2.8 million surface acres and 4 million subsurface acres for agriculture, recreation, commercial real estate, rights-of-way, renewable energy, oil, gas, solid minerals and more. This land is not directly used by the CSLB; instead, it is leased or sold to third parties.

The CSLB operates strictly under the CSLB Board of Commissioners, who act as legal fiduciaries for the trust. Trust land is distinct from public land, in that trust land was granted to the state from the federal government for the express purpose of funding public schools. Unlike public land, CSLB trust land is not open to the public, except in limited locations where it has been leased by third parties for recreational purposes. Additionally, CSLB trust land is managed for the primary purpose of securing the highest financial return for its constitutional beneficiaries.

As the second largest landowner in Colorado outside of the federal government, CSLB owns many parcels of high economic value in and near growing communities. Many of these parcels have high ecological, forest and recreational values and are the focus of local and statewide conservation efforts. Indeed, all eight FLAs contain CSLB land, including FLAs that do not presently have any FLP projects. Thus, including CSLB trust land within the FLA “privately held” land criterion presents a unique opportunity to preserve forests that would otherwise legally be required to be converted into non-forest uses.

## Example project criteria

Table X contains an example of detailed criteria that can be used to assess if the project meets the goals of Colorado’s FAP.

What	Notes and Guide
Project name	
Project overview	<p>This is the executive summary of the project. It should include the core arguments for why the project is important, threatened and strategic (see below). The project overview should include the most compelling attributes and unique aspects of the project. Include how this project supports the goals and priorities identified in <a href="#">Colorado’s Forest Action Plan</a>.</p>
Importance	<p>This section focuses on the attributes of the property and the environmental, economic and public benefits gained from the conservation and management of the property and its resources now and into the future. Highly competitive applications demonstrate the quality, scope and impact of the attributes of the property and project. Ideally, the application would be able to stress state and national benefits.</p> <p>This list of criteria is particularly considered during project assessment and scoring by the state and federal governments. Review each criterion and include if it’s applicable to your property. Make sure to stress multiple state and national benefits and touch on all criteria/benefits to the extent possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic benefits from timber and potential forest productivity – This category includes three independent components: (1) Landowner demonstrates sustainable forest management in accordance with a management plan. State if the land is third-party certified (Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council or American Tree Farm System). (2) Forestry activities contribute to the resource-based economy for a community or region. (3) The property contains characteristics (such as highly productive soils) to sustain a productive forest over time.</li> <li>• Economic benefits from non-timber products and recreation – Provides non-timber revenue to the local or regional economy through non-timber forest products (maple syrup, pine straw, ginseng collection, etc.); recreation and tourism (local or regional benefits related to lodging, rentals, bikes, boats, outdoor gear, guided tours for fishing, hunting or birdwatching, etc.); hunting leases; and/or ranching.</li> <li>• Threatened or endangered species habitat – The property has documented threatened or endangered plants and animals or designated habitat. Documented</li> </ul>

	<p>occurrence and use of the project area is given more consideration in point allocation than if it is habitat without documented occurrence or use. Federally listed species are given more consideration than state-only listed species when evaluating the significance of this attribute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish, wildlife, plants and unique forest communities – The property contains unique forest communities and/or important fish or wildlife habitat as documented by a formal assessment or wildlife conservation plan or strategy developed by a government or a non-governmental organization. Contributions to international initiatives to support and sustain migratory species can be considered here if the property will make a significant contribution, e.g., the target species has been documented to regularly use the property during seasonal migration.</li> <li>• Water supply, aquatic habitat and watershed protection – (1) The property has a direct relationship with protecting the water supply or watershed, such as providing a buffer to public drinking water supply, containing an aquifer recharge area or protecting an ecologically important aquatic or marine area and/or (2) the property contains important riparian area, wetlands, shorelines, river systems or sensitive watershed lands. Consider the importance of the resource, the scope and scale of the property, magnitude and intensity of the benefits that will result from protection of the property. Merely being located within an aquifer recharge area or in a water supply area is not given the same consideration as a property that makes a significant conservation contribution to water, riparian and aquatic resources and habitats.</li> <li>• Cultural/historic – The property contains features of cultural and/or historical significance that are documented by a governmental or a non- governmental organization. A federal designation receives greater consideration.</li> <li>• Tribal – The property provides meaningful benefits to tribal and other Indigenous communities, contains features or resources of cultural significance and/or uses management techniques significant to tribes (traditional ecological knowledge). Greater consideration is given to projects that have been developed with active involvement and partnership with a tribe, or where a tribal organization has documented the importance of the property for cultural practices, resources and benefits.</li> <li>• Benefits to local communities – The property provides meaningful benefits for an identified local community, as designated by a government-sponsored data tool.</li> <li>• Public access – Protection of the property will secure existing access, expand access or establish new access by the public for recreation (including waterfront access); however, restrictions on specific use and location of recreational activities may be allowed. More consideration is given to projects that expand or provide certainty of public access as a result of the proposed project.</li> <li>• Scenic – The property is located within a viewshed of a government-designated scenic feature or area (such as a trail, river or highway). Federal designation is given more consideration than state-only designations when evaluating the significance of this attribute.</li> <li>• Carbon sequestration/climate resilience, adaptation to climate change – Protection of the property will result in benefits related to climate resilience and adaption and carbon sequestration.</li> </ul>
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Threatened	<p>This section focuses on how likely it is that the property will be converted from a forest to a non-forest use. This section specifically focuses on the larger forces acting on the property, such as development potential, renewable energy potential, sale of nearby properties, landowner circumstances, etc.</p> <p>This list of criteria are particularly considered during project assessment and scoring by the state and federal governments. Review each category and list if applicable to your property.</p> <p>Stress multiple state and national benefits, and touch on all criteria/benefits to the extent possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of protection – The lack of temporary or permanent protections (e.g., current zoning, temporary or permanent easements, moratoriums and encumbrances that limit subdivision or conversion) that currently exists on the property and the likelihood of the threat of conversion.</li> <li>• Land and landowners circumstances – Land and landowner circumstances such as property held in an estate, age of landowner, interest of ownership and stewardship of property by heirs of current landowners is uncertain, property is for sale or has a sale pending, landowner anticipates owning the property for a short duration, landowner has received purchase offers, land has an approved subdivision plan, landowner has sold subdivisions of the property, etc.</li> <li>• Adjacent land use – Adjacent land use characteristics such as existing land status; rate of development, growth, and conversion; rate of population growth (percent change); rate of change in ownership, etc.</li> <li>• Ability to develop – Physical attributes of the property that will facilitate conversion, such as access, buildable ground, zoning, slope, water/sewer, electricity, etc.</li> </ul>
Strategic	<p>This section reflects the project’s relevance or relationship to conservation efforts on a broader perspective, considering scale, location and relative contribution to landscape-scale conservation goals.</p> <p>This list of criteria is particularly considered during project assessment and scoring by the state and federal government. Review each category and list if applicable to your property. Stress multiple state and national benefits, and touch on all criteria/benefits to the extent possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation initiative, strategy or plan – How the project contributes to either an existing or new conservation initiative, strategy or plan. Describe the relative contribution of the property to achieving the conservation goals of the plan, strategy or initiative considering scale, location and project attributes. Conservation plans that have been formally designated by a governmental, tribal or non-governmental entity should be given more consideration. Contributions to a new strategy or a strategy under development may also be discussed. This can be useful if a project would contribute to, or catalyze, a new conservation</li> </ul>

	<p>initiative, strategy or plan. For new initiatives, specific goals should be defined and potential contributions of how the project advances those goals should be highlighted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complement protected lands – How the project is strategically linked to or enhances already protected lands, including past FLP projects, public lands (federal, state or local), or private lands conserved through permanent easements. Provide specifics on how the proposed tracts connect to and maintain landscape-scale benefits, e.g., ecological resilience, wildlife migration, watershed function and scenic viewshed integrity.</li> <li>• Benefits to local communities – How the project benefits a disadvantaged community (as defined in the <b>Importance</b> section)</li> <li>• Other landscape-scale goals and public benefits – How the project strategically contributes to the advancement of larger scale conservation goals and public benefits. Examples could include but are not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Forest resilience and disaster mitigation</li> <li>○ Reduced community impacts from wildfire, floods, invasive species</li> <li>○ Expanded public access</li> <li>○ Protection of critical water supplies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Supporting parties	<p>This section highlights who supports the project. For fiscal supporters, include how much they are contributing. For others, describe the partner and/or their support. For each, include letters documenting the support.</p>

## Colorado land trusts

National, regional and local land conservation organizations play a vital role in the protection of private lands in Colorado. These organizations are important partners in the success of the FLP. Colorado is fortunate to have an extensive network of land trusts across the state.

### Certified conservation easement holders and Land Trust Alliance members operating in Colorado

- [Access Fund](#)
- [Adams County Parks, Open Space & Cultural Arts](#)
- [American Farmland Trust](#)
- [Aspen Valley Land Trust](#)
- [Boulder County Parks & Open Space](#)
- [Central Colorado Conservancy](#)
- [City of Fort Collins Natural Areas](#)
- [City of Loveland Parks & Recreation Department](#)
- [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust](#)
- [Colorado Open Lands](#)
- [Colorado Parks and Wildlife](#)
- [Colorado West Land Trust](#)
- [Crested Butte Land Trust](#)
- [Douglas Land Conservancy](#)
- [Ducks Unlimited, Inc. \(Wetlands America Trust\)](#)
- [Eagle Valley Land Trust](#)
- [El Paso County Environmental Division](#)
- [Estes Valley Land Trust](#)
- [Garden Conservancy](#)
- [Jefferson County Open Space](#)
- [La Plata Open Space Conservancy](#)
- [Larimer County Natural Resources](#)
- [Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District](#)
- [Montezuma Land Conservancy](#)
- [Mountain Area Land Trust](#)
- [National Park Trust](#)
- [Orient Land Trust](#)
- [Palmer Land Conservancy](#)

- [Pitkin County Open Space & Trails](#)
- [Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust](#)
- [Roaring Fork Conservancy](#)
- [Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation](#)
- [San Miguel Conservation Foundation](#)
- [South Metro Land Conservancy](#)
- [Southern Plains Land Trust](#)
- [The Conservation Fund](#)
- [The Humane Society Wildlife Land Trust](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [Trust for Public Land](#)
- [The Wilderness Land Trust](#)

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- Colorado State Forest Service
- U.S. Forest Service, Region 2
- Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust
- Colorado Open Lands
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Conservation Fund
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife

## CPW State Wildlife Action Plan

Please refer to CPW’s most current [SWAP](#).

## FLP Implementation Guidelines

This is for reference only. The most recent guidelines posted on the USFS website shall be the rules.

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