

Strategic Recreation and Conservation Plan

PAGOSA AREA RECREATION COALITION



2026

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This strategy was developed through a planning and capacity grant from the Colorado Regional Partnerships Initiative. Planning, technical services, and facilitation support was provided by SE Group. This planning process could not have been completed without the knowledge, guidance, and commitment of our leadership committee and task force members. Continued support from these entities throughout continued planning, implementation, and iterative processes will be critical. Thank you all for your time and effort.

Leadership Committee Member Organizations:

- * Pagosa Area Trails Coalition
- * Town of Pagosa Springs
- * San Juan National Forest, Pagosa Ranger District
- * Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association
- * Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- * Hinsdale County
- * Archuleta County
- * Mineral County
- * Southern Ute Indian Tribe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pagosa Area Recreation Coalition (PARC) Strategic Recreation and Conservation Plan presents a collaborative, landscape-scale strategy to guide sustainable recreation and conservation efforts. Formed to address growing year-round recreation pressure, limited agency capacity, and mounting natural resource concerns, PARC brings together more than 50 representatives from land management agencies, local governments, tribes, nonprofits, recreation providers, and tourism entities. The Strategic Recreation and Conservation Plan establishes a shared framework built on three core guiding principles— healthy and resilient landscapes, sustainable and accessible recreation, and thriving and connected communities—to align investments, improve coordination, and support long-term stewardship across jurisdictions.

Reinforced by visitation data, demographic data, and community survey input—the plan illustrates an evolving recreation landscape where increasing recreation participation, significant seasonal resident population, and large volumes of tourists are increasing demand for parks, trails, and high-quality facilities. These recreation and visitation pressures have the potential to increase degradation of critical wildlife habitat, biodiversity hotspots, sensitive aquatic and riparian systems, and fire-affected forests under stress from drought, insects, and increasing wildfire risk. The plan emphasizes the need to manage recreation pressures and improve user experiences within the layered and rich natural resource, wildlife, and ecological context.

To move from planning to implementation, the plan outlines a transparent, criteria-based project prioritization framework and a portfolio of future project concepts. Projects are evaluated for regional benefit, feasibility, conservation outcomes, and their ability to improve accessibility, inclusivity, and user experience. The plan also clarifies PARC’s long-term role: convening partners; coordinating funding and grant pursuits; improving public information and signage; supporting forest health and wildfire initiatives; and strengthening collaboration with tribal governments, neighboring regional partnerships, and adjacent ranger districts. Sustained engagement from the PARC Leadership Committee, Task Force, public, and local governments, paired with new funding mechanisms and formal agreements, will be essential to achieving a resilient recreation system that supports both community well-being and the long-term health of the landscape.

FORWARD

The Pagosa Area Recreation Coalition (PARC) was formed in response to a clear need to support integrated planning, build trust, and encourage communication with and across land managers. This collaborative approach was especially important in considering the unique recreation and natural resource dynamics in the greater Pagosa Springs region. This region is experiencing rapid growth in year-round recreation use—increasing pressure on trailheads, river corridors, dispersed camping areas, and access roads. Increased recreation pressure, when combined with strained staff capacity and limited funding that characterizes many land management agencies, creates situations where recreation experiences worsen and natural resource health declines.

When the opportunity to form a local coalition specifically designed to facilitate collaboration, support integrated planning, enhance recreation experiences, and protect natural resources arose, it was immediately pursued.

Today, PARC convenes over 50 representatives from land management agencies, local and county government, non-profits, recreation providers, user groups, and tourism development entities to discuss how community needs intersect with local, regional, state, and federal management direction; support continued stewardship of the region; establish clear investment priorities; and navigate the complex funding landscape.

ABOUT THE PLAN

This plan is a strategic document intended to provide a shared framework and clear guidance to assist in identifying priority actions for conservation and recreation within the PARC Study Area (See Figure 2). It is meant to encourage collaborative stakeholder engagement, seek consensus and support, and leverage a wide range of funding strategies and grant opportunities. This advisory document is not legally binding, and should be reviewed and updated as needed.

CHAPTER 1: ABOUT PARC

In 2024, PARC became involved in the state’s Regional Partnership Initiative (RPI), supported by the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). Regional Partnerships are landscape-scale, cross-jurisdictional collaboratives that bring together land managers, local governments, tribal governments, recreation users, conservation groups, and community members to plan for sustainable outdoor recreation, environmental stewardship, and climate resilience—guided by the core pillars of Colorado’s Outdoors Strategy.

PARC GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our guiding principles form the foundation of the goals, actions, and priorities of PARC. While aspirational, these guiding principles are meant to guide conversations, fine-tune proposals, and create actions that are collaborative, coordinated, and co-beneficial.

- 1. Healthy & Resilient Landscapes** - Conserve and restore interconnected ecosystems to support biodiversity, wildlife, and long-term climate resilience. Ensure outdoor spaces are sustainably managed so natural resources thrive alongside responsible human use for future generations.
- 2. Sustainable & Accessible Recreation** - Provide a diverse range of high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities that are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to all. Promote stewardship, minimize impacts to natural resources, and support active lifestyles and physical and mental well-being.
- 3. Thriving & Connected Communities** - Strengthen a vibrant outdoor recreation economy through strong partnerships and cross-sector collaboration among agencies, organizations, businesses, and user groups, enhancing community well-being, promoting shared stewardship, reducing user conflicts, and fostering a strong sense of place for both residents and visitors.

PARC STRUCTURE

Figure 1 outlines the structure and governance of PARC.

Figure 1. PARC Organizational Structure



PARC Leadership Committee

The PARC Leadership Committee (PLC), composed of leaders in land, wildlife, water, and recreation management, provides direction for the planning process and advances PARC's goals. Since October 2024, the PLC has met regularly to guide community engagement efforts, oversee task force participation, and refine communication strategies. The PLC sets task force meeting agendas, reviews recommendations from task force meetings, and guides implementation efforts in line with PARC's guiding principles. The PLC developed a charter in 2024 that outlines decision making, roles, and review processes.

PARC Leadership Committee Representatives

The PLC includes representatives from non-profit organizations, agencies, counties, and the Town of Pagosa Springs. Membership has shifted since its formation due to employment changes and capacity constraints, and engagement with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe has been limited. To strengthen coordination, the Southwest Colorado Regional Partnerships—including the Southwest Colorado Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Roundtable (SCCORR), Montelores, and PARC—are working to streamline and improve a more consistent, coordinated approach to tribal engagement across these entities. The following groups are involved in the PLC:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| * Pagosa Area Trails Coalition | * Colorado Parks and Wildlife |
| * Town of Pagosa Springs | * Hinsdale County |
| * San Juan National Forest, Pagosa Ranger District | * Archuleta County |
| * Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association | * Mineral County |
| | * Southern Ute Indian Tribe |

PARC Task Force

The PARC Task Force (PTF) is a diverse group of 40-50 stakeholders throughout the region who provide a variety of recreation, conservation, agriculture, municipal government, and land management perspectives to help the PLC advance its mission. The PTF meets monthly to discuss recreation and conservation related issues across the study area and refine project ideas. The PTF will guide and support implementation efforts.

See Appendix 1 – Task Force Participants for a full list of all Task Force organizations and representatives.

Public

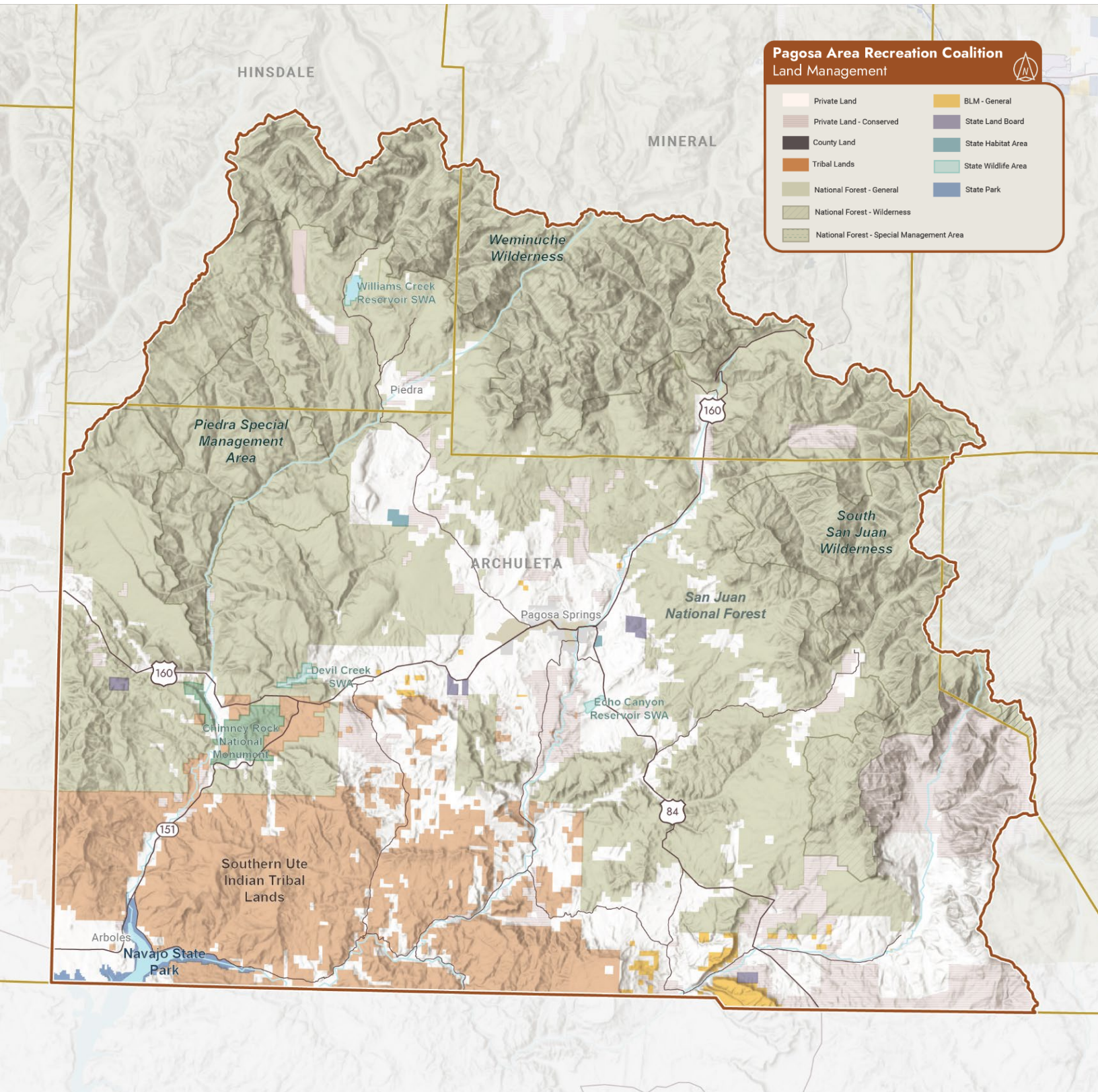
The public plays an important role in shaping the long-term vision of PARC and providing input into management and implementation priorities. The study area community forms the core year-round usership of recreation facilities within the study area. Their guidance and support are critical to the future success and legitimacy of PARC. In 2025, the Community Recreation Survey was shared for public input. The survey received almost 1,400 responses, representing approximately 10% of the study area population (see Appendix 2 – Community Recreation Survey Results). In 2026, a discussion item submittal process was formalized to provide public engagement opportunities.

The draft Strategic Recreation and Conservation Plan was also available for public review in June 2026, and comments and feedback were received through an Open House and online survey. As the strategic plan is implemented, PARC will continue to update the public about strategic initiatives and priority projects through its website and related communications.

PARC STUDY AREA

The PARC Study Area includes the Pagosa Ranger District, Archuleta County, and portions of Mineral County, Hinsdale County, and Southern Ute Indian tribal lands. Figure 2 shows the extent of the PARC study area. (Refer to **Chapter 5: Land Management Direction** for more details about relevant land management categories.)

Figure 2. Study Area Overview Map



CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

The following Community Profile provides demographic context for the study area, illustrating that the study area is home to three distinct but overlapping groups—permanent residents, part-time second-home owners, and visitors—each of whom contributes to recreation demand in meaningful ways. The permanent resident base skews older and retirement-oriented, while part-time residents, many of whom divide their time between Pagosa Springs and other states, are not reflected in Census counts yet use parks, trails, and recreation facilities regularly. Visitors and tourists further expand this user base, often outnumbering permanent residents during peak seasons. Outdoor recreation is the primary draw for all three groups, and the local economy reflects this reality—employment is concentrated in retail, hospitality, food service, and health care, largely oriented toward servicing these populations.

POPULATION

The study area has an estimated population of 14,349, with most residents in Pagosa Springs and Archuleta County and fewer residents in Mineral and Hinsdale Counties.

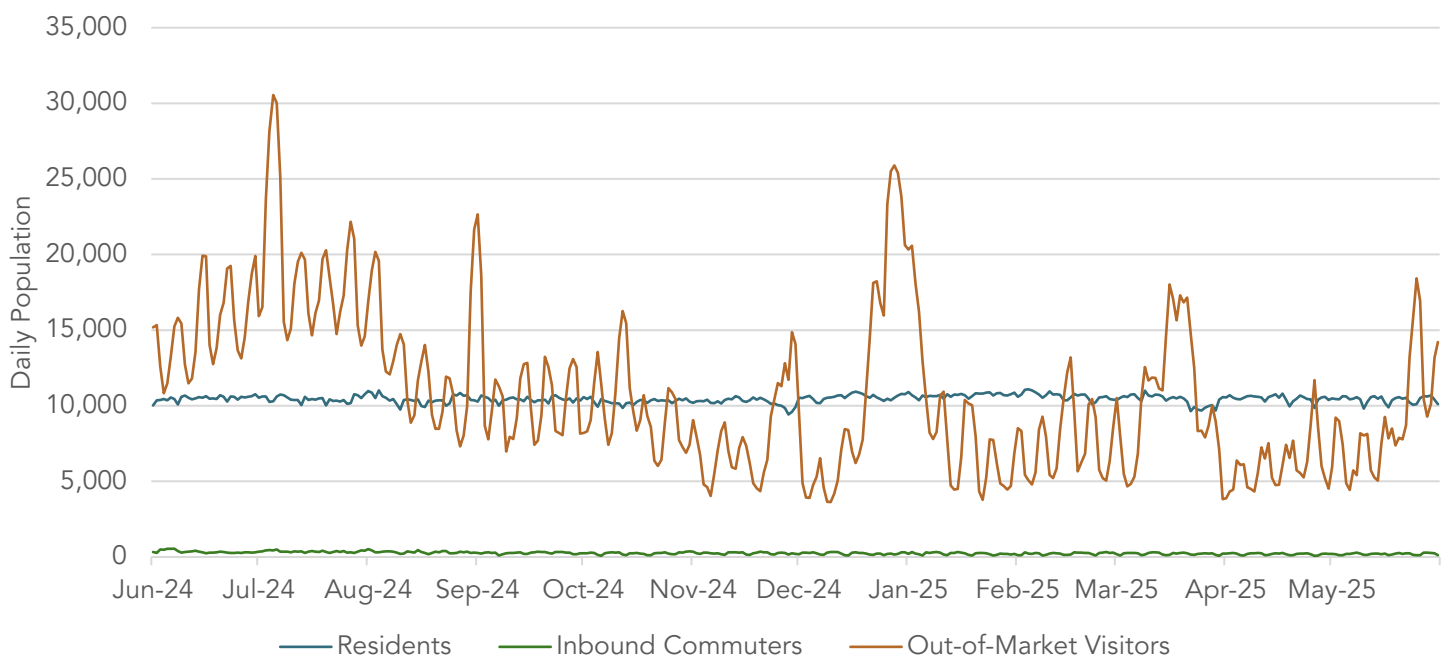
From 2000 to 2010, study area population grew approximately 22%. From 2010 to 2020, population growth slowed to 10%. Between 2020 and 2024, the study area population grew by 894 people, or 7%, with most of that growth occurring between 2022 and 2024. Between 2024 and 2029, the population is expected to grow around 1%, for a total population of approximately 15,113 by 2029.¹

For comparison, the population of Colorado increased approximately 15% between 2010 and 2020—indicating a slower rate of population growth in the study area.

While the full-time resident population growth may be slower than statewide averages, the study area is heavily impacted by part-time residences and seasonal visitation. Table 2 indicates that 39% of housing units (approximately 4,000 units) within the study area are classified as vacant (seasonal, recreational, or temporary use). When these part-time residents are around, primarily in the summer months, the seasonal population of the study area increases significantly. This seasonal growth in visitation can be seen in Figure 3, which illustrates the visitation pattern of residents, inbound commuters, and out-of-market visitors over the course of 2024. The chart illustrates strong visitation peaks in the summer months, with July 4th holiday attracting the most visitors, but also strong peaks related to winter holiday visitation, including Christmas, and spring break in March.

¹ [Colorado State Demography Office](#)

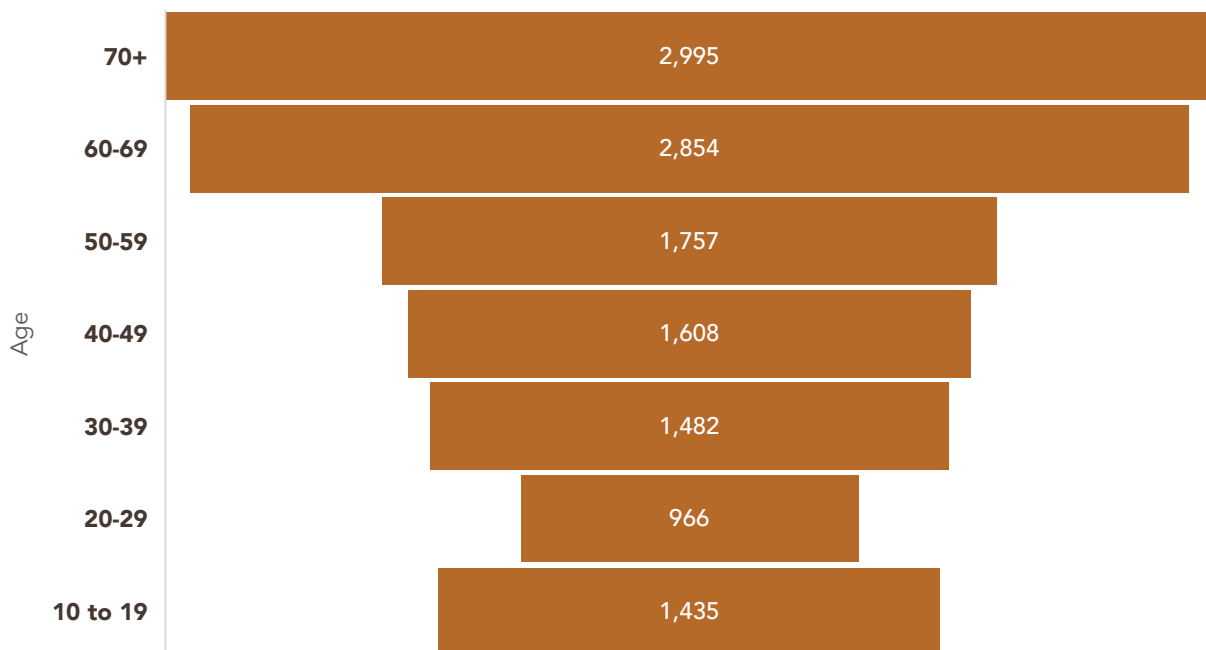
Figure 3. Daily Population Trend - Archuleta County (2024) ²



AGE, INCOME, EMPLOYMENT

The study area has a relatively high median age at 52 compared with the median age in Colorado at 38. The majority of the population is categorized as Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964) at 35%.

Figure 4. Study Area Age Distribution



² Placer.ai

Within the study area, per capita income is approximately \$49,279. This falls 5% below the state average of \$51,923. The top employment sectors include construction, retail, health care, food services/hospitality, and tech services.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

	PARC Boundary	Pagosa Springs	Archuleta County	Colorado
2024 Total Population	14,349	2,090	14,280	6,009,761
2024 Median Age	52.7	52.3	52.7	38.0
2024 Total Businesses	1,331	1,287	1,325	236,780
2024 Employed Civilian Pop 16+	6,738	6,361	6,699	3,208,034
2024 Per Capita Income	\$49,279	\$49,104	\$49,302	\$51,923
2022 Households below poverty level	478	437	475	217,763
2022 Households with rent >30% of income	609	592	607	308,522
2024 Median Age	52.7	52.3	52.7	38.0

Source: Esri Community Analyst, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2025

HOUSING

Like many mountain and recreation-focused communities in Colorado, the study area reflects housing patterns shaped by its tourism economy and lifestyle appeal. The area has a high housing vacancy rate (39% vs. 10% statewide)—a trend consistent with a larger stock of second homes or short-term rentals.

Compared to most Colorado communities, the study area has relatively lower median home values (\$489,655 vs. \$582,777) and lower contract rents, making it more affordable than many Front Range or higher-profile mountain towns. This relative affordability contributes to its appeal among retirees, second-home owners, and remote workers who bring outside income and are less dependent on local wages.

However, housing costs remain high relative to what the local economy supports. The Archuleta County and Town of Pagosa Springs Housing Action Plan³ identified that 65% of unmet housing need in the county is rental housing—reflecting a workforce that struggles to establish itself locally. The county’s rental vacancy rate is 0.5%, meaning virtually no units are available. When workers are priced out and turn over frequently, the resident demographic naturally skews older and more retirement-oriented.

³ 2025 Archuleta County and Pagosa Springs Housing Action Plan; 2025 Regional Housing Needs Assessment (ECONorthwest and Western Spaces)

Table 2. Housing and Household Characteristics

	PARC Boundary	Pagosa Springs	Archuleta County	Colorado
2024 Total Population	14,349	2,090	14,280	6,009,761
2024 Total Housing Units	10,288	1,148	10,175	2,617,121
2024 Vacant Housing Units	4,008	373	3,930	252,278
2024 Vacancy Rate	39%	32%	39%	10%
2024 Median Home Value	\$498,655	\$374,600 ⁴	\$498,773	\$582,777
2024 Median Household Income	\$73,360	\$50,785	\$73,486	\$94,820
2024 Median Contract Rent	\$1,231	\$1,172	\$1,232	\$1,666

Source: Esri Community Analyst, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2025

TOURISM ECONOMY

Tourism plays an outsized role in the study area. Industries related to travel and tourism represent approximately 28% of the economy in Archuleta County, and 16% of the economy in Colorado, showing the region's strong reliance on visitors.⁵ Drawn by outdoor recreation, the hot springs, and small-town character, visitors routinely outnumber full-time residents, particularly during the summer and holidays. In a visitor survey, the top motivations to visit were scenic beauty (64 percent), hot springs (57 percent), and outdoor recreation (45 percent).

The Town of Pagosa Springs is committed to smart growth in the local tourism economy. A robust, growing tourism economy leads to an increase in overnight visitors, which results in increased lodging and sales tax collections. Increased collections offset the tax burden placed on locals resulting in a healthier local economy and more amenities to be enjoyed by all.

The Town of Pagosa Springs and the Visit Pagosa Tourism Board utilize human mobility data tools to understand visitor trends, including visitor origin and trip characteristics. In 2023-2025, visitation surges to the county corresponded with major holiday periods, including Christmas/New Year's, Spring Break (late March), July 4th, and Labor Day. The July 4th holiday routinely produced the largest influx of visitors, with a visitor-to resident ratio of approximately 3:1. Most visitors to Archuleta County came from elsewhere in Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma, and California.

⁴ The Town of Pagosa Springs Housing Needs Assessment data cites Zillow data for median home price & median rent (\$553,500 and \$2,783). For consistency, Census data is reported here.

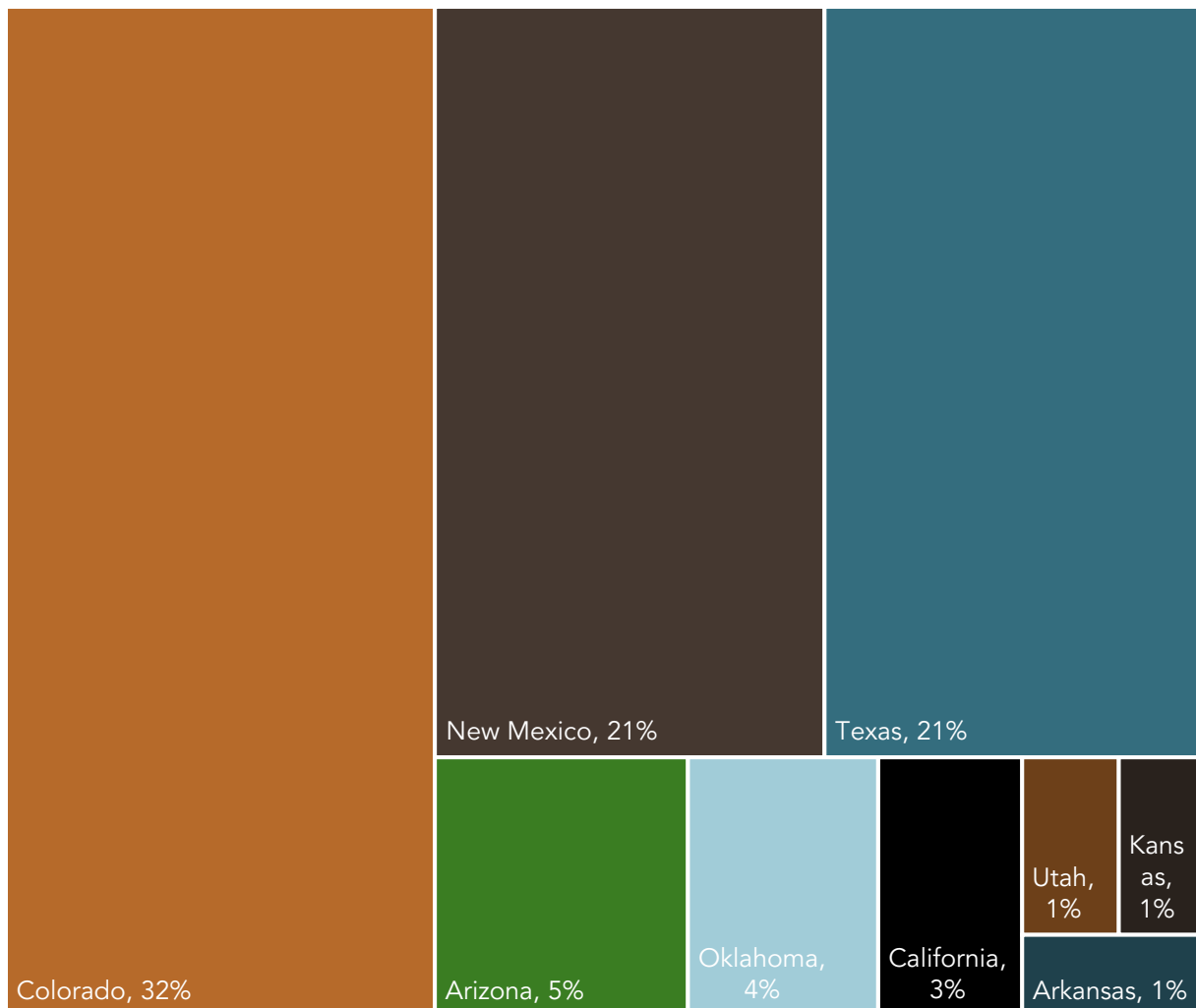
⁵ Headwaters Economics, US Department of Labor, BLS, 2025

According to Placer.AI, the Town of Pagosa Springs saw approximately 4 million visits each year in 2023-2025 from visitors outside Archuleta County.

The top geographical markets that generate the most visitation to the study area include: Albuquerque, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Dallas & Ft. Worth, Texas; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Austin, Texas; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Trip duration patterns are consistent throughout the year and closely tied to visitor origin. Texans stay the longest at an average of 4.1 nights, followed by visitors from Oklahoma and Arizona at 3.8 nights. Colorado and New Mexico visitors—the closest markets—average just 2.3 to 2.4 nights. Overall, longer stays from more distant markets translate to greater economic value per visitor. See Figure 5 for a full breakdown of top visitor origins.

Figure 5. Archuleta County Visitor Origin (2024)



CHAPTER 3: RECREATION LANDSCAPE & USE PATTERNS

Trails

According to COTREX, the study area contains approximately 1,085 miles of trails (summer and winter) and roads open to recreational use, of which approximately 47% are exclusively for non-motorized use and 53% are open to motorized use. Motorized trail mileage includes both designated motorized trails and roads open to motorized travel; there are no known trails (non-roads) that are exclusively for motorized use.⁶

Non-Motorized Trails

Nearly half of the existing trails in the study area (506 miles, or 47%) are open to only non-motorized travel. Some of these trails are within designated SJNF wilderness or special management areas, meaning that mechanized travel (including biking of any kind) is prohibited. However, some exceptions to this rule exist. For example, a small portion of non-motorized trails allow over-the-snow motorized travel (e.g., snowmobiling) under high snowpack conditions.

Motorized Trails

There are approximately 579 miles of motorized trail corridors in the study area. These include OHV, ATV, e-bike, and motorcycle trails as well as specific segments of county and forest roads that are open to OHV travel. Of these motorized trails, approximately 32 miles are open year-round and approximately 537 miles are open seasonally. Seasonal closures are generally implemented during the winter and spring to protect wildlife breeding or migration, control erosion, and/or manage multi-use conflicts among different user groups.

- * **OHV Registrations:** OHV registration sales data (2022-2024) indicate that, on average, about 400 OHV registrations are sold annually in the Pagosa Springs area. Likewise, on average, about 1,550 OHV registrations are sold annually to people in the 81147 zip code. These can be considered proxy metrics that indicate strong and continued interest in OHV riding in the study area (CPW 2025).⁷
- * **Snowmobile Registrations:** Snowmobile registration sales data (2022-2024) show that, on average, about 115 snowmobile registrations are sold annually in the

⁶ COTREX data used for this plan does not include comprehensive information about (non-)motorized access; the presented information is based on best available data.

⁷ Note that OHVs are not authorized on Town of Pagosa Springs or Archuleta County roads; therefore, OHV use in the study area is designed to occur on designated motorized trails and/or private lands. Some OHV use may be for ranching purposes rather than recreation.

Pagosa Springs area. Likewise, on average, about 400 snowmobile registrations are sold annually to people in the 81147 zip code. These can be considered proxy metrics that indicate strong and continued interest in snowmobiling in the study area (CPW 2025).⁸

Hunting & Shooting Sports

Hunting and big game guiding and outfitting are popular on NFS, CPW, BLM, and private lands in the study area during the fall and spring hunting seasons. The study area contains CPW-managed Game Management Unit (GMU) 77 and 78, and a large portion of GMU 771. These units allow for archery, muzzleloader, and rifle hunting of big game under a mix of permit types.

Each year, a set (limited) number of licenses is allotted to each CPW-managed GMU. Hunters can apply for big-game draws to receive one of these limited licenses—or after the draws are over, hunters can purchase a remaining (leftover) limited license as they go on sale. Some licenses for elk and bear are also available independent of the draws and are not restricted in quantity (unlimited). These can be purchased over-the-counter after they go on sale.

- * **Hunting Licenses:** Sales data (2025) shows that approximately 3,900 hunters purchased over-the-counter (unlimited) bull elk permits to hunt across GMUs 77, 78, and 771—the units intersecting the study area—along with approximately 2,700 limited elk licenses, 3,300 total deer licenses, 870 limited bear licenses, and approximately 1,100 unlimited bear licenses. Collectively, these figures reflect strong and continued interest in hunting in this area. Other license types (mountain lion, furbearer, small game, turkey and waterfowl) are commonly purchased online or at vendors outside the area and are valid state-wide, making it more difficult to track buyers' demographic or geographic information.

Shooting sports activity (including both firearms and archery) in the study area extends beyond hunting. As there is no dedicated public shooting range for practicing shooting skills or training, shooting activity is currently dispersed and uncontrolled, which presents environmental concerns such as lead contamination and fire hazards, and can induce conflicts with other public land users. Fisher Archery Range does provide opportunities for target practice, and Wolf Creek Gun & Bow Association was recently awarded grand funding for a new archery range that will be developed for novice and youth shooters.

Fishing and Boating

Fishing and boating are similarly popular activities on NFS, CPW, BLM, tribal, and private lands in the study area. Popular destinations include Navajo Lake State Park,

⁸ Note that snowmobiles are not required to ride exclusively on trails under adequate snowpack conditions; therefore, snowmobile use may also occur in the study area outside designated trail corridors on both public and private lands.

Lake Capote, Bruce Spruce Ranch, the Echo Canyon Reservoir State Wildlife Area (SWA), and the Williams Creek Reservoir SWA, all less than a 45-minute drive from the Town of Pagosa Springs. The Pagosa Quality Fishing Project stocks the San Juan River with fish during the summer, and non-tribal member fishing opportunities also exist on the Piedra and San Juan rivers on tribal lands.

Fishing licenses are available through CPW, and the number of licenses issued per year is typically not capped. Options for licenses include 1-day, 5-day, or annual licenses.

- * **Fishing Licenses:** Sales data (2022-2024) show that over-the-counter fishing permits in the Pagosa Springs area average about 6,000 annually (CPW 2025). This suggests strong and consistent interest in local fishing opportunities. However, this metric likely underrepresents actual demand, since many anglers purchase licenses online or at vendors outside the area (similar to hunting licenses).
- * **Boat Registrations:** Sales data (2022-2024) show that, on average, about 35 boat registrations are sold annually in the Pagosa Springs area. Likewise, on average, about 600 boat registrations are sold annually to people in the 81147 zip code (CPW 2025). These can be considered proxy metrics that indicate strong and continued interest in boating in this area.
- * **Navajo Lake State Park Visitation:** Recent visitation in Navajo Lake State Park (2021-2024) show that, on average, nearly 300,000 people visit the state park each year, many of whom boat and fish during their visit. Visitation reached a peak during 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, dropped slightly in 2022, and is again on a growth trajectory into 2025. The busiest months for visiting are May-September. July is consistently the busiest month, experiencing an influx of 60,000-70,000 visitors (CPW 2025).

Camping

There are a number of campgrounds and camping areas in the study area, many of which see high use and visitation pressures. This includes 10 campgrounds on NFS land (managed by concessionaires) with a total of about 220 sites. There are also a number of dispersed camping areas on NFS and BLM lands. The Blanco River group site is the most popular on NFS land, with occupancy rates of about 90%. Teal is the next most heavily used campground, with occupancy rates during the month of July ranging around 90%. Most other NFS campgrounds have less than 50% occupancy rates. Across the Pagosa Ranger District, there is no campground with electrical hookups, and only one campground that has sewer and water hookups.

The 10 major campgrounds on NFS land (listed alphabetically) include:

- * Blanco River Campground
- * Bridge Campground
- * Cimarrona Campground
- * East Fork Campground

- * Lower Piedra Campground
- * Palisades Horse Camp
- * Teal Campground
- * West Fork Campground
- * Williams Creek Campground
- * Ute Campground

In addition, many private campgrounds or RV parks exist on private land in the study area (e.g., Pagosa Riverside Campground, Pagosa Pines RV Park, etc.). These sites typically include more amenities (e.g., electrical, sewer, and/or water hookups, Wi-Fi, access to community spaces, etc.), and they are generally located closer to the Town of Pagosa Springs. Camping is also seasonally offered at the Lake Capote Campground on Southern Ute tribal lands. In total, there are about 340 additional camping and RV sites across private campgrounds. Some Pagosa area residents reside seasonally or full-time in RV or trailer parks, in part due to limited availability of affordable housing.

Town Recreation

The Town of Pagosa Springs offers a range of recreation opportunities independent of surrounding public lands. Major assets include more than 10 parks and several miles of multi-use trails maintained by the Town of Pagosa Springs Parks and Recreation Department. Popular destinations are Town Park, Reservoir Hill Park, Yamaguchi Park, and the River Walk Trail along the San Juan River. Several access points along the river allow for fishing, kayaking, tubing, and rafting. In the winter, Reservoir Hill and Town Park have sledding areas, and some multi-use trails are maintained for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. The town is also famous for its hot springs—private resorts provide access to pools for paid guests, and a primitive (free) pool is located near the river. Just outside town, the Pagosa Springs Golf Club offers an 18-hole course with scenic mountain views. While the Town does not own or operate the Golf Club, it is open to the public.

In recent years, the Town has been exploring the development of additional recreational fields, indoor recreation facilities, and the acquisition of additional public parkland.

In 2025, the Town began exploring acquisition of a 303-acre property adjacent to Reservoir Hill with the Forest Legacy Grant Program. If the Town can secure funding, this acquisition would increase the size and accessibility of Reservoir Hill while providing natural resource protection for the Pagosa Skyrocket and the Mill Creek Corridor—a portion of the local watershed. The acquisition would support additional recreation use by opening up existing private trails to public use, and creating space for a two-way, graded road. This property would also provide opportunities for additional conservation efforts related to wildlife habitat and forest health.

The Town has also explored the need for additional developed (indoor and outdoor) recreation, including additional field and court space, an aquatic facility, and indoor training space (weights, yoga, aerobic exercise, etc.). The specific location and layout of these facilities have not been identified.

Town Recreation Programming

The Town of Pagosa Springs Parks and Recreation Department offers recreation programming for kids and adults—including camps and clinics for sports, dance, yoga, and nature exploration—hosted at Town-operated parks or the Ross Aragon Community Center adjacent to Town Hall. In addition, the Town hosts outdoor education clinics with SJNF outfitters and guides. Complementing this programming, several local organizations draw participants from across the region, including DUST2 (mountain bike camps), Audubon of the Rockies and Pagosa Community Initiative (youth camps at Fourmile Ranch), Colorado 4-H Club (camps and outreach events), and Archuleta Seniors (fitness classes, social events, and educational seminars for older residents).

County Recreation

Archuleta County is defined by its rural character, and when viewing county recreation in the broader context, a central focus is placed on supporting agriculture and youth development. This is predominantly achieved through a close working relationship with CSU Extension, which supports community programming such as the Colorado 4-H for camps and outreach events. One of the most popular draws to the county is the Pagosa Rodeo that takes place and the fairgrounds throughout the summer.

While the Town of Pagosa Springs serves as the largest community and the primary hub for developed recreation, Archuleta County directly manages two park spaces, Veterans Memorial Park and Cloman Park. Cloman Park is a 120-acre recreation area near Steven's Field airport that features hiking and biking trails, an 18-hole disc golf course, and groomed cross-country ski trails in the winter.

The Town and County combined Parks & Recreation advisory board has identified potential needs for new developed recreation facilities, including additional athletic fields (field and court space), a Multi-Purpose Pavilion, and a designated Shooting Range. The County has provided support for the Wolf Creek Gun and Bow Association's current bow range and is actively working with county manager and the Sheriff's Office to establish a formal shooting range in the county. This formal facility has been discussed as a resource for officer training and would provide a safe, managed location for firearms education and responsible recreation.

PLPOA Recreation

The [Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association \(PLPOA\)](#) is a private, mixed-use planned development comprised of over 6,600 properties in 27 unique subdivisions encompassing over 13,000 acres, located immediately west of the Town of Pagosa Springs. The PLPOA consists mainly of single-family residential lots, but also includes condominiums, townhouses, apartments, and commercial properties. The Pagosa Lakes Recreation Center is a focal amenity of the PLPOA, open to PLPOA members only (and their guests). The Recreation Center is a 19,500 square foot facility on 12 acres of land. Originally built in 1987, and renovated in 2014, the Recreation Center includes an indoor pool, sports courts, a strength training gym, and fitness classrooms. Fishing permits are also available through the Recreation Center for the nearby Pagosa Lakes. The PLPOA also offers a network of natural surface trails and paved multi-use paths that are open to the public. The west and northwest portions of PLPOA abut National Forest system lands, with residents-only parking areas and access points.

In 2025, the PLPOA Parks, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation Committee (PTORC) completed an update to its 2013 Parks and Trails Master Plan.⁹ This updated plan summarizes its completed projects and outlines new trail and park priorities over the next several years. Completed improvements include boat ramps, parking lots, restrooms, community gardens, parks, and trail segments. The updated plan identifies 14 prioritized trail segments and five park/trailhead projects. PLPOA has approximately \$780,000 budgeted for two major trail projects in 2027-2028, with remaining projects dependent on grants (e.g., Colorado State Trails, Great Outdoors Colorado) and related public/private partnerships. An additional \$58,900 annually is reserved for ongoing trail maintenance.

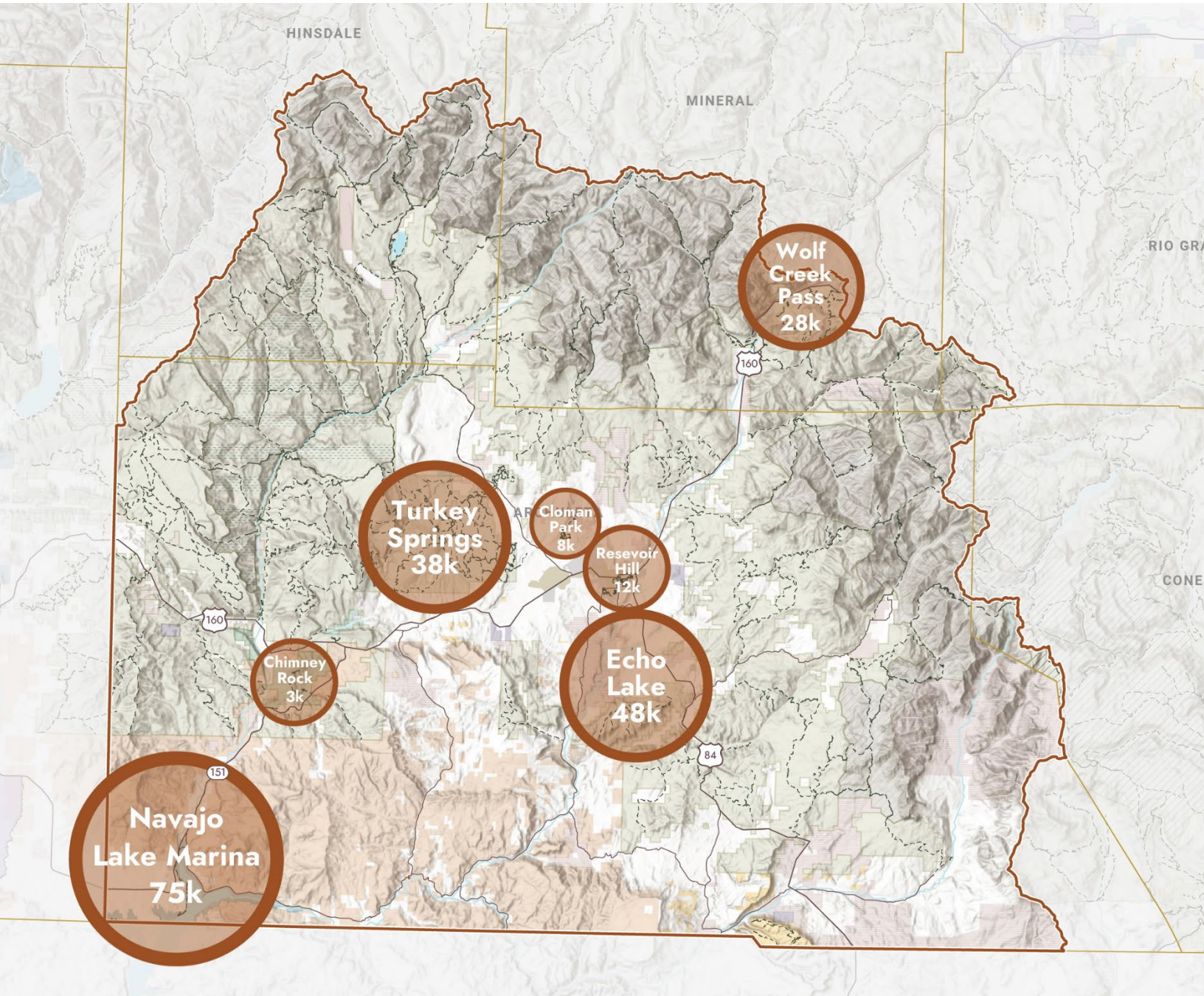
In 2025, PLPOA proposed building a new enclosed gymnasium next to the existing recreation center, costing around 2–2.5 million dollars and funded largely by a one-time \$255 special assessment per property, with some reserves already earmarked by the board. The facility was promoted as a multi-sport gymnasium and youth-oriented amenity for PLPOA members, with limited access for outside leagues via rental arrangements. The measure failed due to concerns about costs and questions around who could access the gym.

⁹ PLPOA Updated Parks & Trails Master Plan, updated 2025

Recreation Zone Visitation Trends

Relative hotspots for recreation use within (or immediately adjacent to) the study area include Treasure Falls, Wolf Creek Pass, West Fork, Coyote Hill, Piedra River Trail, Four Mile Falls, Turkey Springs, and Reservoir Hill. Figure 6 displays relative visitation trends in a few locations across the study area, using 2024 data from Placer.AI. As there are gaps in this data and limited on-the-ground observations to calibrate these visitation estimates, these data should not be considered authoritative, but rather an indicator of relative use.

Figure 6. Recreation Use Hot Spots (2024)



CHAPTER 4: CONSERVATION CONSIDERATIONS

The region surrounding Pagosa Springs forms several critical ecological corridors in southwest Colorado. Characterized by a diverse range of ecosystems, from alpine tundra and montane forests to riparian zones and high desert shrublands, this area supports a mix of wildlife species and provides essential ecosystem services.

The following information provides background on sensitive species, habitats, and landscapes that should be considered throughout land and recreation management processes. PARC utilizes data and information from within CODEX, as well as local guidance from partners and land managers such as USFS Pagosa Ranger District, CPW, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Winter Wildlands Alliance, and the San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership.

Wildlife Management Context

Wildlife management in the area focuses on balancing the health of species populations with multiple land uses, including public recreation, timber harvest, grazing, and traditional uses (e.g., hunting, fishing, cultural ceremonies, etc.).

Key wildlife species of concern include:

- * **Big Game Species:** Elk, mule deer, black bear, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, and mountain lion are common throughout the region, with seasonal migrations tied to elevation and habitat availability.
- * **Federally Listed Species:** The study area includes known, potential, or proposed habitat for the following species listed under the Endangered Species Act of 1973: Pagosa skyrocket (Endangered), New Mexico jumping mouse (Endangered), Southwest willow flycatcher (Endangered), Mexican spotted owl (Threatened), Yellow-billed cuckoo (Threatened), Silverspot butterfly (Threatened), Canada lynx (Threatened), and Gray wolf (Experimental Population).¹⁰
- * **Sensitive Fish Species:** Native trout populations, including San Juan lineage cutthroat trout (a Colorado Species of Special Concern), are present in high-elevation streams and headwaters. This species was designated as sensitive by the Regional Forester due to concerns over population status, trend and habitat

¹⁰ The Pagosa skyrocket is the only federally-listed species that has known critical habitat designated by the USFWS within the PARC study area. Habitat for other species is modeled based on current species information.

conditions. Other sensitive fish species include the Colorado River cutthroat trout, bluehead sucker, flannelmouth sucker and roundtail chub.

- * **Avian Diversity:** The area supports a variety of raptors, migratory birds, and species reliant on intact riparian corridors.

Conservation Concerns

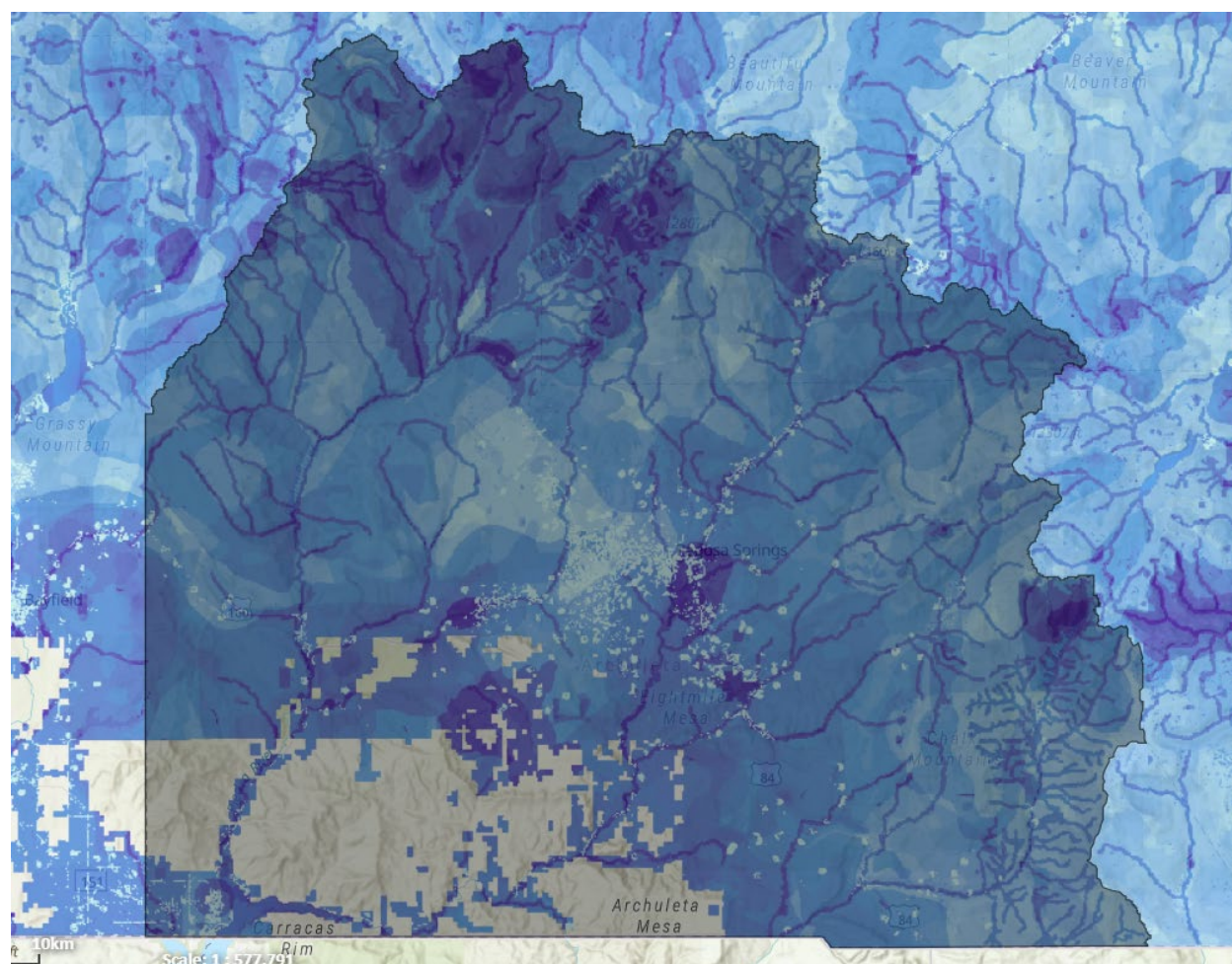
Primary conservation issues in the region include:

1. **Habitat Fragmentation:** Expansion of recreation infrastructure (e.g., trails, trailheads, dispersed campsites) poses risks of fragmenting key wildlife corridors, for a variety of species.
2. **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** Increased human presence, particularly during peak recreation seasons, has resulted in more frequent encounters with large mammals (e.g., black bears), often related to improper food storage and waste management in dispersed camping areas. Wildlife-vehicle collisions are also a concern with expanded human use across the landscape.
3. **Aquatic Health:** Water quality concerns related to sedimentation, streambank degradation, and increasing recreation pressure near sensitive aquatic habitats threaten native fish populations and riparian ecosystems.
4. **Invasive Species:** Noxious weeds such as Canada and musk thistle, cheatgrass, leafy spurge, and knapweeds have degraded many natural and agricultural lands, and are encroaching pristine ecosystems and newly disturbed sites often following unmanaged recreation such as illegal OHV activity, the use of non-weed free forage, and introduction of seeds clinging to boots and bike tires. Drought conditions can exacerbate the spread of invasive species.
5. **Loss of Dark Skies:** Many wildlife species rely on natural day-night cycles for behaviors such as hunting, foraging, mating, and navigation. Increased human presence can introduce light pollution, disrupting these patterns. In response, dark sky advocates in the Pagosa community have expressed interest in designating a portion of the study area as a Dark Sky Park through [DarkSky International](#).

Biodiversity

The CODEX Conservation Summary is a composite map that combines multiple spatial data layers representing the array of biodiversity values known statewide. According to CNHP, the Conservation Summary data layer aggregates data from sensitive and non-sensitive data sets, enabling decision-making based on the information from layers that are not publicly accessible. There are several biodiversity hotspots along the northern portion of the study area, the majority of which overlap with the Weminuche Wilderness area. Biodiversity hotspots in the eastern portion of the study area overlap with the South San Juan Wilderness. There are other biodiversity hot spots just south of downtown Pagosa Springs and west of town. Figure 7 illustrates the biodiversity hotspots, darker colors represent higher biodiversity values.

Figure 7. CODEX Conservation Summary

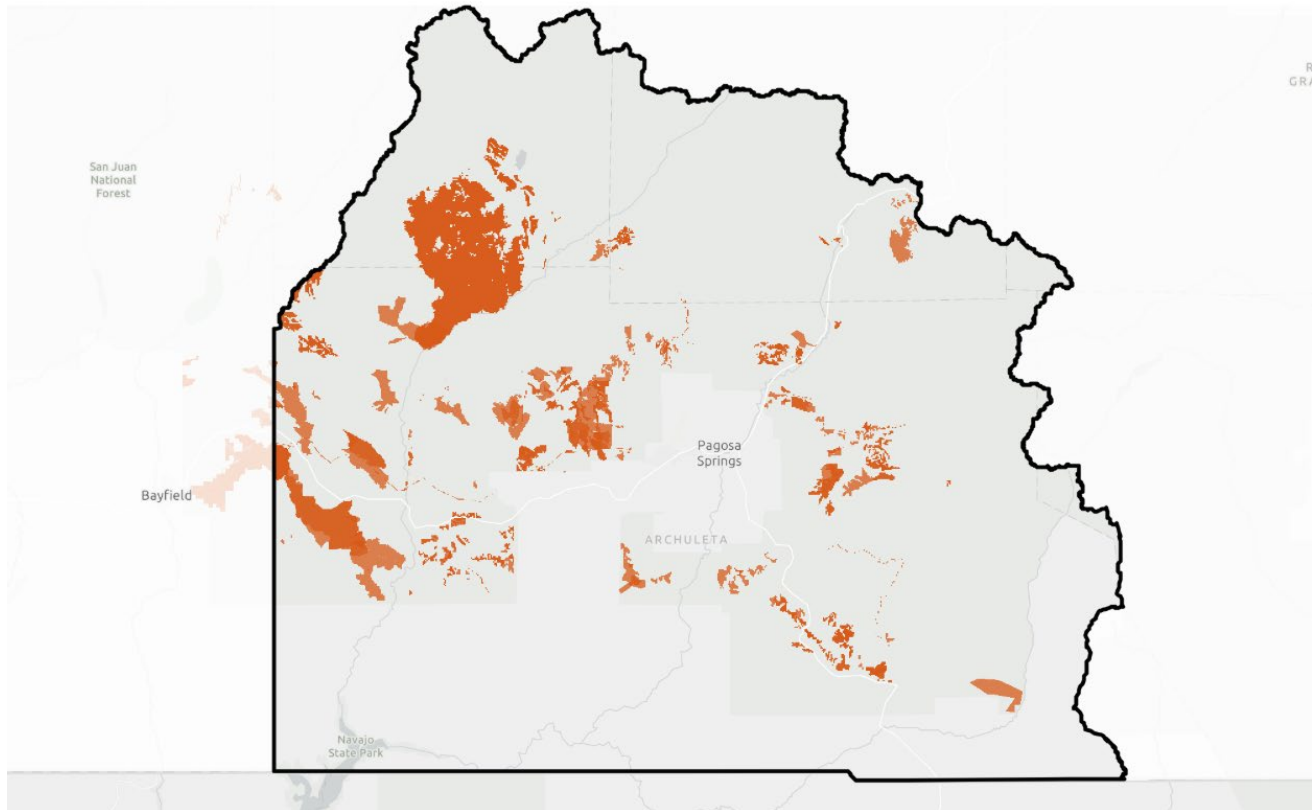


Forest Health

Forest health across the study area is substantially influenced by the compounding effects of drought, bark beetle infestation, and wildfire. The SJNF has experienced widespread tree mortality over the past two decades, particularly among spruce and fir stands at higher elevations, driven by spruce beetle outbreaks intensified by warming temperatures and drought stress. Engelmann spruce, which dominates much of the high-elevation forest in the region, has been especially hard hit, with mortality visible across large contiguous areas north and east of the Town of Pagosa Springs. These disturbances have fundamentally altered forest structure and composition, reduced canopy cover, and created dense accumulations of dead and downed timber that elevate wildfire risk. Increased fuel loads, combined with the region's history of drought and high winds, have contributed to a more active and severe fire environment—a dynamic that affects not only ecological systems but the safety and accessibility of recreation infrastructure. Watershed function is also affected, as tree mortality and post-fire conditions accelerate runoff, increase erosion, and reduce water retention across the landscape.

Ongoing forest management efforts aim to improve resilience at a landscape scale. The San Juan Forest Health Partnership—a collaborative of federal, state, local, and nonprofit stakeholders—supports fuels reduction, timber harvest, and prescribed fire treatments across the SJNF. Figure 8 illustrates completed and planned fuel treatment areas within and adjacent to the study area, highlighting the geographic extent of active forest management and its relationship to recreation corridors and community protection zones.

Figure 8. Fuel Treatment Areas (Past and Planned)



Looking ahead, several initiatives are underway or under consideration to better protect the study area from catastrophic wildfire and associated flood risk. The Wildfire Ready Action Plan (WRAP), funded through a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board, represents a proactive framework for coordinating community preparedness, watershed protection, and post-fire flood mitigation at the local level. Additional opportunities exist through collaborative fuels treatments on private and municipal lands, expanded prescribed fire programs, and post-fire watershed restoration efforts targeting areas most vulnerable to erosion and flooding. Taken together, these efforts reflect a growing recognition that forest health, water security, and community safety are deeply interconnected—and that long-term recreation access in the study area depends in part on the resilience of the surrounding landscape.

Ecosystem Sensitivities

- * **Alpine and Subalpine Meadows:** Sensitive to trampling and off-trail recreation, leading to soil erosion and degradation of rare plant communities.
- * **Riparian Areas:** Serve as critical wildlife corridors and nesting habitat; they are highly susceptible to disturbance from dispersed camping and trail encroachment.
- * **Old Growth and Mixed Conifer Forests:** Provide denning and hunting grounds for wildlife and nesting habitat for migratory birds, requiring protection from fragmentation and high-use recreation areas.
- * **Critical Habitat:** CODEX contains a spatial dataset developed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) that maps critical habitat areas using a hexagonal grid system to identify concentrations of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN). The Critical Habitat Layer aggregates and ranks occurrences of SGCN based on prevalence of both plant and animal SGCN within the hexagonal layer range. Figure 9 shows the distribution of crucial habitat in and surrounding the PARC study area, ranked from highest to lowest (red to yellow). The critical habitat layer is incorporated into the spatial analysis for the Conservation Summary (Figure 7).
- * **Big Game Species Habitat:** In 2025, the planning team developed species-specific maps to more clearly illustrate the distribution of elk (Figure 10) and deer (Figure 11) migration corridors, severe winter range, production and winter concentration area.

Figure 9. Plant and Animal Critical Habitat

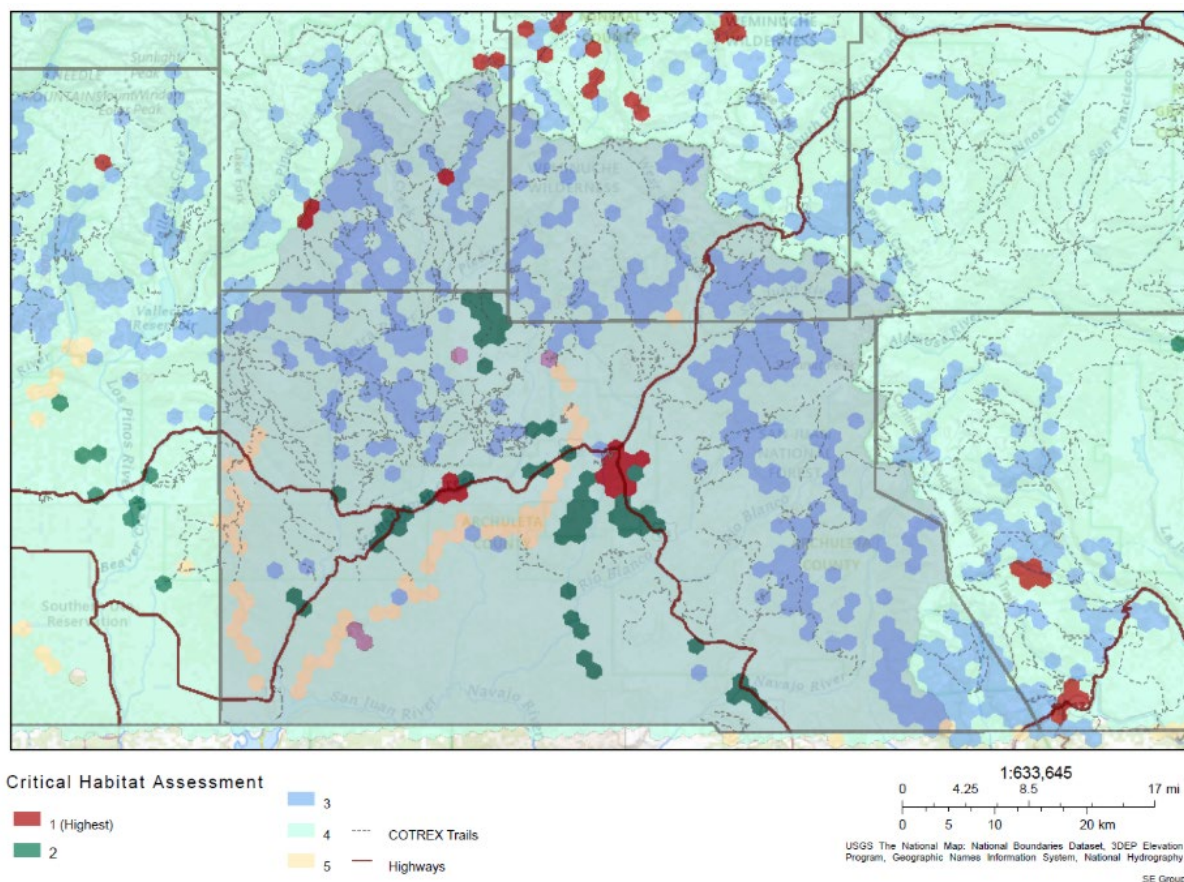


Figure 10. Elk Habitat Areas

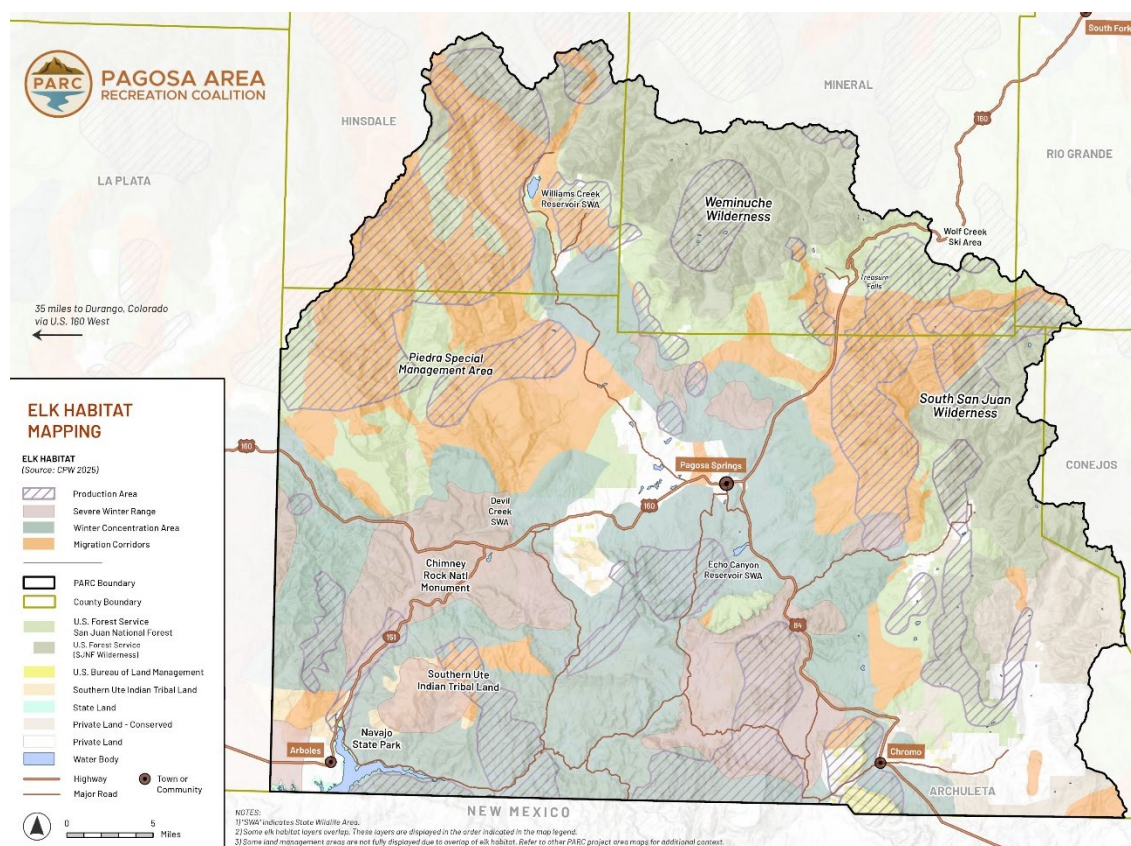
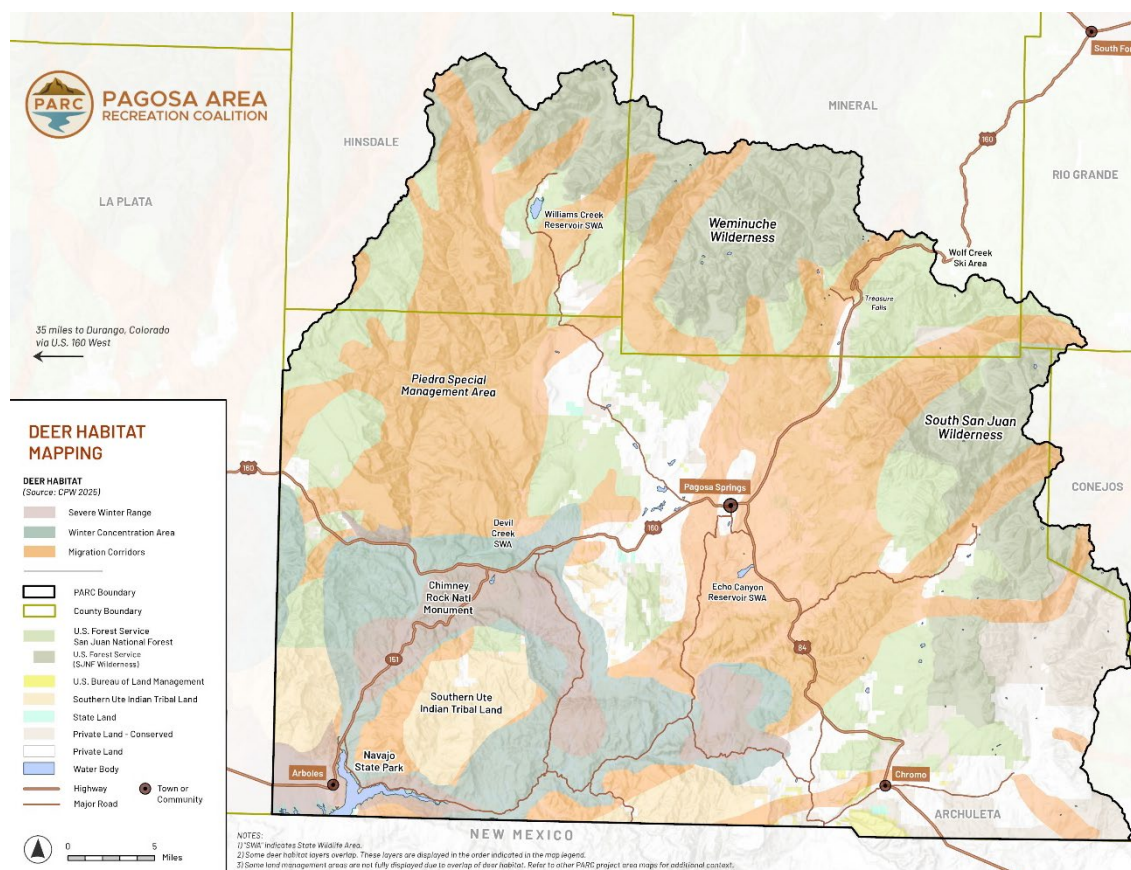


Figure 11. Deer Habitat Areas

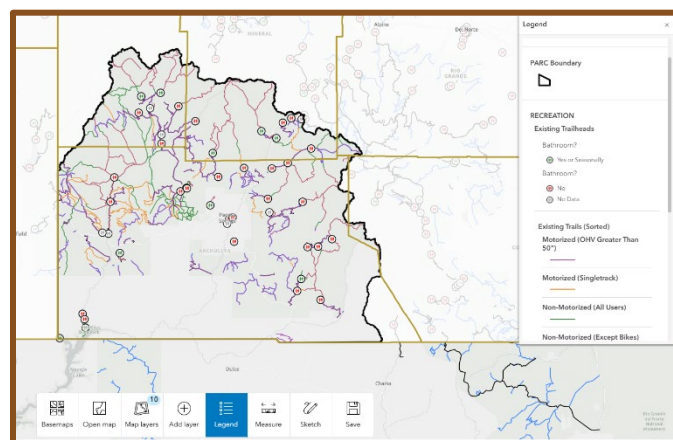


CLIMATE & HAZARDS

In March 2023, Archuleta, Hinsdale, and Mineral Counties—along with the U.S. Forest Service, the Town of Pagosa Springs, and state and regional partners—developed the **2023–2028 Hazard Mitigation Plan**. This plan outlines key natural hazards, climate trends, and vulnerabilities affecting the region, which closely mirrors the boundaries of the PARC study area. Information below is drawn from the Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Colorado Climate Center at Colorado State University, the State of Colorado, and the hazard data platform First Street.

- * **Rising Temperatures:** Average temperatures across the southwestern U.S. have already increased and are projected to continue rising. This warming trend is expected to intensify drought conditions, increase the risk of megadroughts (lasting 10+ years), and reduce long-term water availability.
- * **Snowpack Decline:** Winters are becoming shorter with reduced snow accumulation, resulting in smaller and less stable snowpack, earlier spring runoff, and increased likelihood of seasonal water shortages.
- * **Drought and Runoff Variability:** Warming temperatures are expected to alter annual runoff patterns and reduce soil moisture and snowmelt retention, leading to more variable water supply conditions.
- * **Extreme Precipitation Events:** Increased atmospheric moisture from warming may contribute to more frequent and intense precipitation events, elevating flood risks and affecting reservoir management.
- * **Wildfire Risk:** The region faces a high risk of future wildfires due to hotter, drier conditions and a lengthening fire season. Forest ecosystem health may also decline with prolonged dry periods and heat stress.
- * **Species Habitat Shifts:** Climate change is expected to drive significant shifts in wildlife habitat and migration patterns as species move in search of more suitable environments.
- * **Heat Risk:** Although average temperatures are projected to rise, the number of extreme heat days in the Pagosa Springs area is not expected to reach levels that pose significant public health or infrastructure risks.

To explore and interact
with all mapping layers,
please visit the [PARC
Mapping Atlas](#)



CHAPTER 5: LAND MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Land in the study area reflects a diverse mix of federal, state, local government, tribal, and private ownership, detailed in Table 3. Summary of PARC Study Area Land Management.

Importantly, all lands within the study area are ancestral Ute territory, ceded to the federal government through the Brunot Agreement of 1873—a transfer that established the federal land ownership framework that continues to shape recreation access and management in the region today. (Refer to the “Southern Ute Indian Tribal Land” section below for more detail.)

Table 3. Summary of PARC Study Area Land Management

Land Manager	Study Area (ac)	Study Area (%)
U.S. Forest Service (San Juan National Forest)	629,294	57%
<i>SJNF – General</i>	<i>215,687</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>SJNF – Weminuche Wilderness</i>	<i>185,868</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>SJNF – South San Juan Wilderness</i>	<i>64,593</i>	<i>6%</i>
<i>SJNF – Piedra Area</i>	<i>41,871</i>	<i>4%</i>
Private Land – General	233,827	21%
Southern Ute Indian Tribal Land	131,576	12%
Private Land – Conserved	85,414	8%
Colorado State Land	8,296	< 1%
<i>Colorado Parks and Wildlife</i>	<i>6,747</i>	<i>< 1%</i>
<i>Colorado State Land Board</i>	<i>1,549</i>	<i>< 1%</i>
U.S. Bureau of Land Management	5,745	< 1%
Town of Pagosa Springs	3,201	< 1%
Total	1,097,353	100%

Source: CODEX, COMaP 2025

SAN JUAN NATIONAL FOREST

Land managed by the San Juan National Forest (SJNF), under the U.S. Forest Service, accounts for the majority (57%) of land in the study area. This land spans the Pagosa and Columbine Ranger Districts of the SJNF. The study area lies at the eastern edge of the SJNF, with the Town of Pagosa Springs serving as a popular eastern access point to the National Forest.

Of the SJNF land in the study area, 30% is not designated as wilderness or a special management area (i.e., “general”). However, 17% of the study area is part of the Weminuche Wilderness, 6% is part of the South San Juan Wilderness, and 4% is part of the Piedra Area.

SJNF – General

Under the [2013 SJNF Forest Plan](#), all SJNF land is subject to forest-wide policy direction. In addition, all SJNF land is categorized into one of seven management area allocations, and each is assigned specific desired conditions and allowable uses. Table 4 describes the breakdown of all SJNF land that overlaps the study area by SJNF management area. Table 5 shows the allowable, restricted, and prohibited uses by each management area.

Overall, most SJNF land in the study area is managed for natural processes to dominate (23%), or for natural landscapes to persist with limited management (22%).

Only a small fraction of the study area is currently managed for high-use recreation emphasis or highly developed areas (< 2% total).

Table 4. San Juan National Forest Management Areas

SJNF Management Area	Study Area (ac)	Study Area (%)
MA 1 – Natural Processes Dominate	255,673	23%
MA 2 – Special Areas and Designations	44,641	4%
MA 3 – Natural Landscapes, with Limited Management	244,064	22%
MA 4 – High-Use Recreation Emphasis	12,137	1%
MA 5 – Active Management (commodity production to meet multiple-use goals)	147,393	13%
MA 7 – Public and Private Lands Intermix	68,139	6%
MA 8 – Highly Developed Areas	824	< 1%
Total	772,871	70%

Note: Total acreage is greater than the sum of SJNF lands mentioned in Table 3 due to private land ownership within the SJNF boundary. There is no MA 6 due to the elimination of a management area during the latest Forest Plan revision process. (Source: 2021 SJNF Forest Plan)

Table 5. Allowable, Restricted, and Prohibited Uses by SJNF Management Area

Activities & Uses							
	MA 1	MA 2*	MA 3	MA 4	MA 5	MA 7	MA 8
Fire managed for resource benefit	Allowable		Allowable	Restricted	Allowable	Prohibited	Prohibited
Prescribed burning	Allowable		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Mechanical Fuels Treatment	Restricted		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Timber Production (scheduled on a rotation basis)	Prohibited		Prohibited	Restricted	Allowable	Prohibited	Prohibited
Timber Harvesting as a tool	Prohibited		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Commercial Use of special forest products and firewood	Prohibited		Allowable	Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Restricted
Land use ROWs, special use permits, and utility corridors	Prohibited		Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Livestock grazing	Allowable		Allowable	Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Restricted
Facilities	Prohibited		Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Motorized (summer)	Prohibited		Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Motorized (winter)	Prohibited		Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Non-Motorized (summer & winter)	Allowable		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Mechanical Transport	Restricted		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Road Construction	Prohibited		Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Minerals – leasable (oil and gas, and other)	Restricted		Restricted	Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Restricted
Minerals – locatable	Prohibited		Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable	Allowable
Minerals – saleable (materials)	Prohibited		Restricted	Restricted	Allowable	Allowable	Restricted

*MA 2 areas are managed to protect or enhance their unique characteristics; therefore, management intensity and suitability differs by each area.

In addition, all SJNF land is categorized into one of six Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) settings. These settings describe the *desired* recreation experiences available on the SJNF, ranging from primitive, undisturbed areas to highly developed, urban areas. They help managers match recreation opportunities (e.g., solitude, challenge, convenience) with appropriate facilities, access, and levels of use. These settings can differ in summer and winter. Table 6 describes the breakdown of all SJNF land that overlaps the study area by ROS setting.

Table 6. San Juan National Forest Recreation Opportunity Settings

SJNF ROS	Study Area (ac)	Study Area (%)	Study Area (ac)	Study Area (%)
	Summer	Summer	Winter	Winter
Primitive Wilderness	232,196	21%	232,196	21%
Primitive	0	0%	0	0%
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	149,480	14%	175,325	16%
Semi-Primitive Motorized	232,315	21%	192,761	18%
Roaded Natural	150,922	14%	164,631	15%
Rural or Urban	7,958	< 1%	7,958	< 1%
Total	772,871	70%	772,871	70%

Note: Total acreage is greater than the sum of SJNF lands mentioned in Table 3 due to private land ownership within the SJNF boundary. (Source: 2021 SJNF Forest Plan)

Roughly 21% of the study area is desired Primitive Wilderness; therefore, it is unlikely to be developed for additional recreation, as new development can conflict with wilderness character.

However, the study area also has a healthy mix of desired Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (~15%), Semi-Primitive Motorized (~20%), and Roaded Natural (~15%) areas. Very little (<1%) of the study area is *desired* as highly developed.

SJNF – Weminuche Wilderness

The [Weminuche Wilderness](#) is Colorado's largest designated wilderness, spanning approximately 500,000 acres on the SJNF and a portion of the Rio Grande National Forest. This area overlaps the northernmost part of the study area. Established in 1975 under the Wilderness Act of 1964, and expanded by the Colorado Wilderness Acts of 1980 and 1993, it protects one of the most rugged, remote, and ecologically diverse landscapes in the Southern Rockies. Recreation restrictions include no mechanized or motorized travel (including no biking of any kind), and limits on group sizes. These measures are intended to preserve the natural and undeveloped aspects of a wilderness setting.

SJNF – South San Juan Wilderness

The [South San Juan Wilderness](#) covers approximately 158,790 acres on the SJNF and a portion of the Rio Grande National Forest. This area overlaps the easternmost part of the study area. Established under the Colorado Wilderness Acts of 1980, it encompasses the southeastern extent of the San Juan Mountain Range, including a 42-mile segment of the Continental Divide. Like the neighboring Weminuche Wilderness, restrictions include no mechanized or motorized travel (including no biking of any kind), and limits on group sizes. These measures are intended to preserve the natural and undeveloped aspects of a wilderness setting.

SJNF – Piedra Area

The [Piedra Area](#), a 61,535-acre section of the SJNF, lies in the northwesternmost part of the study area. Established under the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 and named after the Piedra River, this area aims to balance conservation and recreation. This area is not formally designated as wilderness, but it remains a candidate for future inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Because this area serves as a buffer between wilderness and more heavily used lands, it ultimately offers a wilderness-like experience. Typical wilderness area restrictions apply, including no mechanized or motorized travel (including no biking of any kind), and limits on group sizes, to preserve the area's natural character.

SJNF – Chimney Rock National Monument

In addition, the Chimney Rock National Monument, located approximately 17 miles west of the Town of Pagosa Springs, is managed by the SJNF. Established in 2012, the monument spans almost 4,700 acres—it is a sought-after recreation destination for its dramatic rock formations, and it has archaeological connections to ancestral Pueblos.

PRIVATE LAND – GENERAL

Private land (owned by various individuals, businesses, and other organizations) accounts for approximately 22% of land in the study area. This land is mostly managed for residential, commercial, ranching, grazing, and/or personal property use. The region has a notably strong ranching heritage, and many residents seek to retain the western character of the landscape. Some larger planned developments, such as Hidden Valley Ranch and the Pagosa Lakes Property Owners Association (PLPOA), offer a combination of open space, lake access, and private homesites.

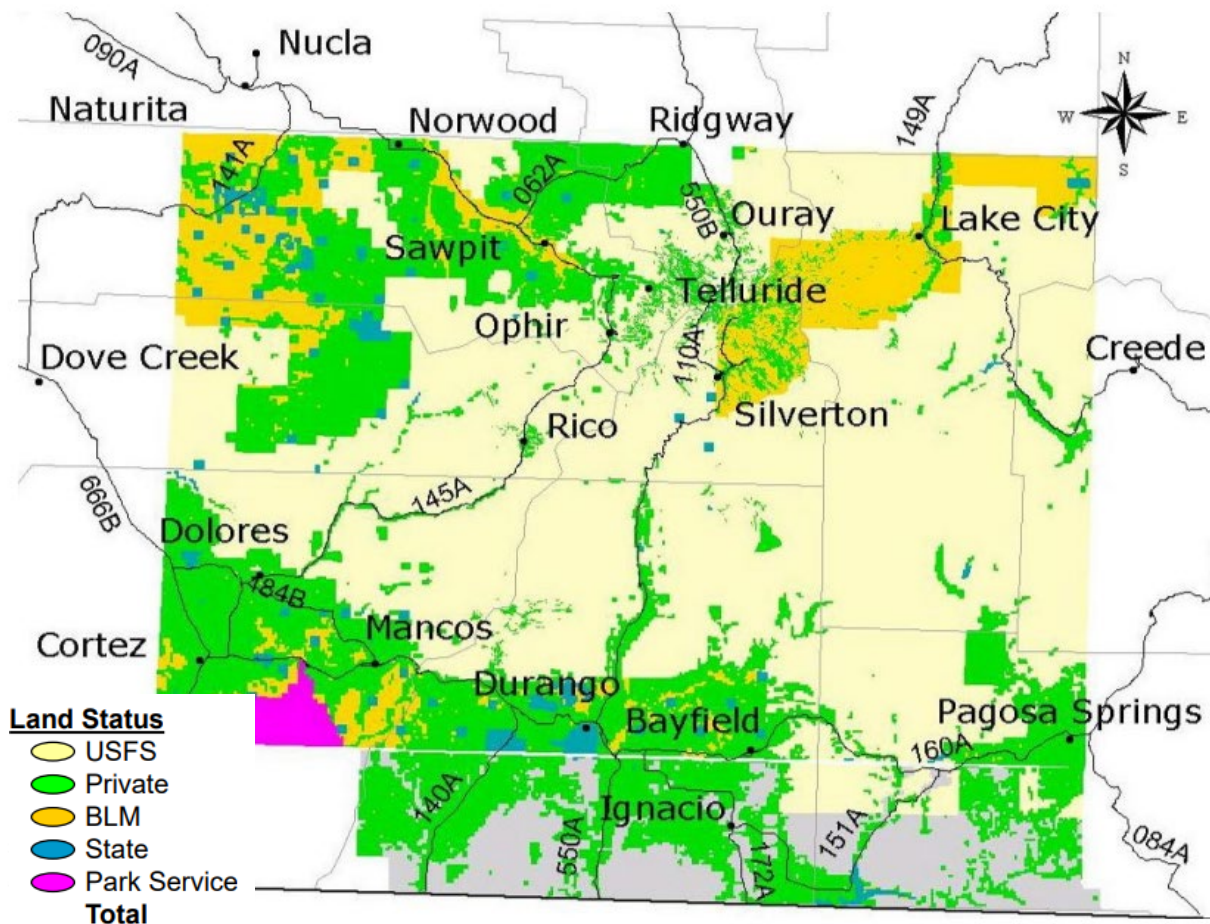
SOUTHERN UTE INDIAN TRIBAL LAND

The first Colorado Ute reservation was established in 1868 and encompassed nearly the entire western third of the state. Between 1870 and 1895 numerous actions by Congress reduced the size of the Reservation. These included the Brunot cession of 1873, the Agreement of 1880, the Act of 1882 following the Meeker Massacre,, the

Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887, and the Hunter Act of 1895 ("Homestead Act"). Through these actions the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute bands were separated and moved to different Reservations in SW CO.

Today, the Southern Ute Reservation, spans approximately 682,000 acres from the eastern edge of Montezuma County to the middle of Archuleta County, and from points south of U.S. Highway 160 to the Colorado-New Mexico state line. The Reservation encompasses a complex "checkerboard" pattern of tribal trust lands, allotments, homestead fee tracts, tribally- or Indian-owned fee land, and National Forest System and Bureau of Reclamation lands.

Figure 12. Brunot Area¹¹



Under the Brunot Agreement, the Colorado Ute Tribes retained important rights to access and use lands for traditional purposes, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering. These reserved rights continue to inform land and recreation management in the region and are an important consideration in planning on public lands. The Southern Ute Indian Reservation covers approximately 12% of the study area, with its headquarters in the nearby Town of Ignacio. The Southern Ute Tribe (under a 2008

¹¹ https://cpw.state.co.us/sites/default/files/dam/iwuevufmr1/item.9_cpw_commission_brunot.pdf

MOU) retains co-management authority with CPW for wildlife management in the Brunot Area.

Within the study area, the [Southern Ute Indian Tribe](#) manages reservation lands in the southwestern portion for purposes that blend cultural preservation, economic development, and environmental stewardship. Land use includes residential areas for tribal members, sacred sites for cultural and ceremonial activities, natural resource management (including hunting, fishing, oil, gas, and timber extraction), and large tracts dedicated to ranching and traditional agriculture.

In recent years, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe has diversified its economy through a range of commercial and cultural enterprises, including operations such as a casino, retail centers, and cultural tourism facilities like its museum and cultural center. While these ventures generate revenue and provide employment, recreation opportunities for non-Tribal members on Reservation lands remain limited. Public-facing recreation is primarily concentrated at the Lake Capote Recreation Area and designated fishing access along certain river corridors.

PRIVATE LAND – CONSERVED

Different from “Private Land – General,” approximately 8% of land in the study area is private land that has been set aside for conservation or is under legal protection to preserve its natural, ecological, agricultural, or historical values. This includes private property that has been placed under an easement, and/or land that has been transferred to ownership under a land trust. These lands are not publicly owned, but their use is restricted or managed in a way that prioritizes conservation goals.

STATE LAND

Land owned by the State of Colorado comprises less than 1% of the study area.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Small tracts of land owned and operated by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) include State Wildlife Areas (SWAs), such as the Devil Creek SWA, Echo Canyon Reservoir SWA, and Williams Creek Reservoir SWA. These SWAs have specific restrictions for the protection of wildlife and natural resources (e.g., seasonal closures, areas that prohibit motorized access, etc.).

In the southwestern corner of the study area, CPW owns and manages Navajo State Park. Created in 1958, the park provides recreational opportunities around the Navajo Reservoir, namely boating and fishing. This area covers approximately 4,000 acres (the reservoir covering nearly 1,500 acres itself), immediately adjacent to the New Mexico border.

Colorado State Land Board

Other land owned and operated by the Colorado State Land Board (CSLB) includes holdings for grazing, timber management, agriculture, and/or recreation. The CSLB typically offers leases for these activities, and revenue helps to fund Colorado public schools and other trust beneficiaries.

U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Land owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) makes up less than 1% of the study area. Small parcels to the south of the study area are managed for a mix of uses including grazing and recreation.

TOWN OF PAGOSA SPRINGS

The Town of Pagosa Springs is the only incorporated town within the study area. The town features a mix of residential, commercial, agricultural, and recreational land uses that reflect its small-town character and natural surroundings. Residential areas range from in-town neighborhoods to rural properties on larger parcels, and the town center serves as the primary commercial hub with shops, restaurants, and services supporting both residents and tourists. The town is centrally located in the study area and is a gateway for regional recreation.

Smaller, unincorporated communities in the study area include Piedra (population of approximately 30), located 20 miles to the northwest of the Town of Pagosa Springs, and Arboles (population of approximately 350) located 35 miles to the southwest, near the New Mexico border at the edge of the Southern Ute Indian Reservation.

ARCHULETA SCHOOL DISTRICT

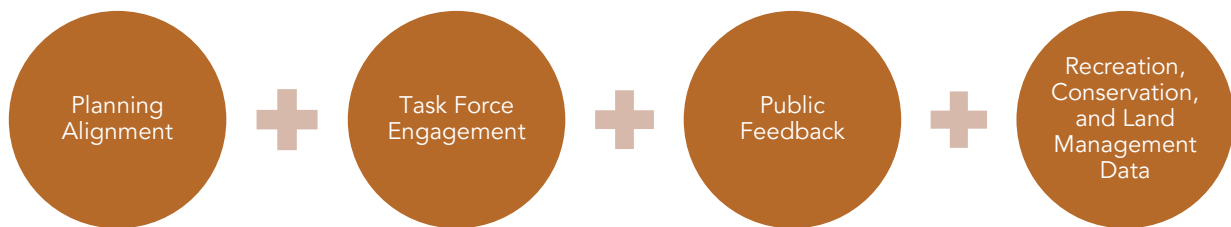
The Archuleta County School District operates five schools, serving about 1,600 students. School campuses have a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Pagosa Middle School and Pagosa High School have gym facilities for physical education (PE) classes, games, assemblies, and community events. Pagosa High School has multipurpose grass fields for football, soccer, and PE classes, and the Elementary and K-8 school has playground equipment, hard courts, and smaller play fields.

Recent community conversations related to a new PK-8 school site and recreation fields have highlighted the need for improved athletic fields and additional indoor recreation spaces. The Town of Pagosa Springs has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the School District for use of recreational facility space.

Additionally, the Town, DUST2, and the School District have collaborated on the Dakota Springs Trail area near Pagosa High School – a 30-acre parcel with 2.5 miles of purpose-built, flowy mountain bike trail.

CHAPTER 6: FUTURE PROJECTS

PARC has worked diligently to identify landscape-scale priorities where conservation, restoration, and recreation can be advanced together. The following projects were shaped by community and stakeholder engagement, relevant planning guidance, coordination with land management agency staff, and technical spatial data.



Planning Alignment

Coordinated planning and funding is one of the three north star goals of Colorado's Outdoors Strategy. As a whole, PARC is organized to fulfill this goal through the continued collaboration between state agencies, federal agencies, local government, and the broader network of partner organizations and stakeholders. However, coordinated planning requires a strong awareness and intentional inclusion of the previous guidance and management direction. The following planning documents provide guidance and support for PARC's community engagement and analysis process and help guide future implementation and funding priorities.

- * Town of Pagosa Springs Comprehensive Plan
- * Archuleta County Community Plan
- * Archuleta County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- * Archuleta County Regional Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Master Plan
- * Archuleta County Town-to-Lakes Trail Master Plan
- * Colorado's Outdoors Strategy
- * Colorado's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- * San Juan National Forest Land Management Plan
- * Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind
- * Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan

Task Force Engagement

The PARC Task Force is a diverse group of around 50 stakeholders throughout the study area who provide a variety of recreation, stewardship, education, conservation, agriculture, municipal government, and land management perspectives. Across 2024 and 2025, Task Force members discussed summer recreation, winter recreation,

opportunities for coordination, trail maintenance needs, developed recreation, shooting sports, river recreation, and new trail proposals. Task Force members have provided informational presentations around topics such as Trail Management Objectives (TMOs), mountain bike trail design best practices, town recreation, ski area expansion ideas, campgrounds, backcountry horseman, and grazing permittees. Meeting notes and presentation materials are available at [PagosaPARC.org](https://www.pagosaPARC.org).

Public Feedback: PARC Community Recreation Survey Results

PARC conducted a Community Recreation Survey in Spring 2025 to help understand recreation user trends, conservation values, and management priorities in the study area. The survey included two rounds of engagement between March and June—generating a total of 1,385 responses (approximately 10% of the study area’s population). The survey indicated that respondents want recreation managed in ways that protect natural resources and wildlife while keeping existing trail systems functional, addressing overcrowding, and investing in supportive infrastructure and education. While there was a desire for new amenities, maintaining existing recreation assets is a high priority. The following graphic summarizes many of the key issues and themes from the survey. A full survey summary can be found in Appendix 2 – Community Recreation Survey Results.

Public Feedback: PARC Plan Draft Review

In June 2026, a draft of the PARC Strategic Recreation and Conservation Plan was released for public review. Approximately 200 responses were received through the Open House and online survey engagement opportunities. Findings from this survey largely reinforced prior feedback—community members prioritized conservation and recreation amenity maintenance, forest health, wildlife corridor protection, and amenities such as restrooms and trash. Respondents were interested in being involved in further discussions regarding trail closures and OHV connections and stated concerns about areas where bike activity may displace hikers and equestrians. Other write-in comments mentioned concerns related to e-bike proposals and desires to focus on trout habitat restoration in the San Juan River.

Public Feedback Key Issues & Themes

1. Wildlife Habitat Health

- a. 65% of survey respondents ranked “protect natural resources” and “protect wildlife” as the highest management priorities, stating that action was very important and extremely important.
- b. Considerations of high priority habitat and migration corridors
- c. WUI wildfire risk, opportunities to integrate recreation planning with fuels reduction and forest health projects

2. Emphasis on Maintaining Existing Recreation Opportunities

- a. 60% of survey respondents selected that maintaining current multi-use recreation opportunities was the highest management priority, behind

protecting wildlife and protecting natural resources. 97% of respondents marked “maintaining current multi-use recreation opportunities as somewhat important, important, or very/extremely important.

3. Desired Recreation Amenities

- a. 90% of respondents stated that developing more recreation opportunities was somewhat important to extremely important.
- b. Survey respondents want more non-motorized trails (including winter-specific and multi-use paths), more mountain-bike-optimized trails, and improved hunting and shooting opportunities
- c. Lack of indoor recreation space, especially pool and gym facilities for youth and families, structured programming for adults.

4. Growth, Crowding, and Capacity

- a. Sentiment that “everything has gotten busier”
- b. Increased use is creating pressure on infrastructure and staff capacity
- c. Parking shortages, crowded trailheads, poorly maintained trails, and degraded user experience
- d. Desire to formalize key routes, improve quality rather than just adding mileage

5. Infrastructure & Maintenance

- a. Bathroom maintenance, more toilets, improved trail maintenance, more signage, and expanded or hardened parking at key access points.
- b. Focus on and desire for more trail maintenance

6. User Conflict

- a. Motorized and non-motorized (e.g., snowmobiles on groomed ski routes, OHVs near quiet trail users)
- b. Hunters and shooters with other users (e.g., personal safety, horses getting spooked)

7. Dispersed Camping and Resource Damage

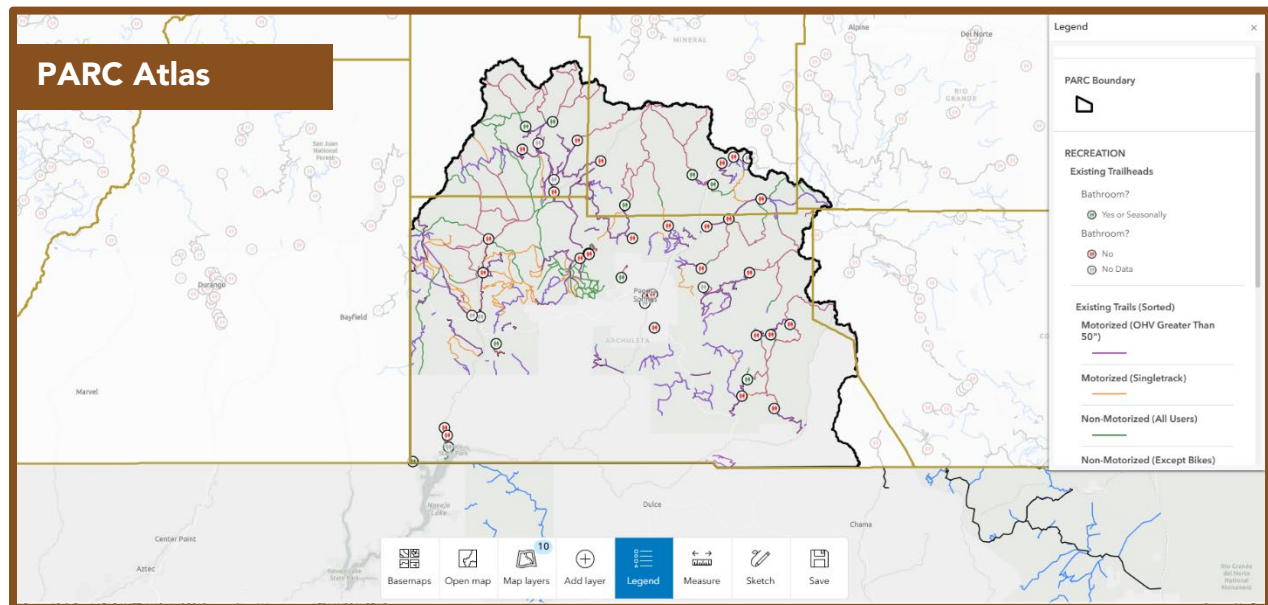
- a. Trash, water quality issues, erosion
- b. Desire for increased management (etiquette, toilets, trash)

8. Future Funding

- a. open to dedicated recreation funding, favoring lodging and sales tax approaches and user-fee concepts over property tax increases
- b. willingness to pay modest monthly amounts and volunteer time for recreation and conservation
- c. constrained Town and County budgets, heavy reliance on grants (e.g., GOCO), and the central role of volunteer groups (PATC, DUST2, Nordic Club, Back Country Horsemen, etc.) in maintenance and stewardship

Recreation, Conservation, and Management Spatial Data

Throughout the engagement process, spatial data were used to explore existing recreation assets, land management boundaries, and natural resource areas. The [PARC Atlas](#) is a tool to overlay spatial data layers in an interactive web map platform. The Atlas was used to inform discussions on recreation opportunities, high-priority wildlife areas, and areas of conflict across the landscape. Spatial data layers were collected from CPW, CoMAP, USFS, Archuleta County, and the Town of Pagosa Springs. Information from CODEX, such as the Conservation Summary and Critical Habitat layers were also reviewed.



PROJECT LIST

CAMPING & CAMPGROUNDS

Background

The study area contains 10 USFS campgrounds (one of which is a group campground) and a total of 220 sites. Williams Creek is the largest of these campgrounds, with 60 sites. The Blanco River group site is the most popular, with occupancy rates of about 90%. Teal is the next most heavily used campground, with occupancy rates during the month of July ranging around 90%. Most other campgrounds have less than 50% occupancy rates. Across the district, there is no campground with electrical hookups, and only one campground that has sewer and water hookups. The sites do not accommodate larger vehicles and RVs well, although there is a demand for those types of sites. While there is high demand for camping in the area, illustrated by increases in dispersed camping around Turkey Springs and East Fork, occupancy rates at most campgrounds hovering around 50% indicate that the existing sites, reservation system, and amenities may not be aligning with market interests.

In addition to USFS-managed sites, privately owned campgrounds and RV parks in the broader area provide alternative camping opportunities, often with more developed amenities (e.g., hookups and larger RV accommodations). These private options may be capturing a portion of demand that is not currently met within the National Forest system.

Providing electrical and water hookups in the study area would require significant investment, although there is a trend for campground to provide these amenities as they are remodeling. Additionally, there is only one ADA accessible site within the District. Beyond infrastructure investments, information clarity around availability may also enhance utilization of the sites.

Finally, the operating window of certain campsites may also be restricting utilization, as there is interest in campgrounds being open later to accommodate fall users, especially hunters.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Dispersed Camping Management** - Evaluate dispersed camping site sustainability in areas such as East Fork and Turkey Springs. Consider designated dispersed camping management strategies.
- * **Campground Amenities** - Add a limited number of electric and water hookups at high-demand USFS campgrounds (e.g., East Fork, Williams Creek, Ute) to better

accommodate RVs and longer-stay visitors. As enhancements are made, renovate select campsites to meet ADA standards

- * **Campground Site Modifications** - Reconfigure and expand campground parking lots and spur sites to accommodate larger and wider vehicles
- * **Information Access** - Improve visitor information through updated on-site kiosks and Recreation.gov that clearly describe site availability, amenities, sizes, road conditions, seasonal access, and regulations.
- * **Campground Availability** - Work with concessionaire to extend group site availability and other campground sites as desired
- * **Management Coordination** – Ensure Forest Service and CPW coordination on regulations and management relating to Teal Campground and Williams Creek Reservoir
- * **Campground Development** – Explore opportunities and feasibility of town-managed campground development to expand close-to-home camping opportunities and revenue generation

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Community survey findings show strong and consistent camping demand alongside concerns about overcrowded sites, aging infrastructure, and lack of amenities, with many respondents prioritizing maintenance and modernization over entirely new facilities.
- * Colorado’s SCORP prioritizes maintaining and improving existing recreation infrastructure, expanding ADA access, and concentrating use in well-designed, high-capacity sites to reduce dispersed impacts on sensitive habitats.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - steers camping pressure toward designated, better-managed sites and away from sensitive dispersed areas, which helps reduce soil impacts, resource degradation, and pressure on wildlife and riparian areas.

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves campground amenities, ADA access, parking, and information clarity so more people can use existing sites comfortably, safely, and with fewer barriers.

Thriving & Connected Communities - meets strong local camping demand, reducing overcrowding and user frustration, and supporting a recreation economy that benefits residents, visitors, and local businesses.

DEVELOPED RECREATION FACILITIES

Background

The Town of Pagosa Springs and Archuleta County have several well-maintained parks and facilities that serve local needs, enhance quality of life, and provide high quality visitor experiences. The addition of key amenities and facilities would expand offerings, increase access, and address service gaps. Connectivity, wayfinding, and developed recreation assets (indoor recreation, field and court space, ice rink, river access points) were among the most-desired enhancements identified through community input.

Archuleta County manages two park facilities: Cloman Park and Veterans Park. The County also manages a vast network of roads and multi-use paths that help residents and visitors access the wide array of town, state, and federal recreation assets. The Combined Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, a joint board between the Town of Pagosa Springs and Archuleta County, helps guide coordination, planning, and decision-making related to parks and recreation across jurisdictions. Because the County does not have a dedicated Parks, Recreation, or Open Space department, management and maintenance of these assets is done by Public Works and through coordination with the Town of Pagosa Springs. Opportunities relating to County park space relate to parking and access and additional forest health and fuel mitigation projects at Cloman Park (paving scheduled for spring 2026). Forest health projects at Cloman Park represent a good opportunity for partnerships with the Wildfire Adapted Partnership for a forest health education area.

Many Town facilities and recreation areas are connected via sidewalks and multi-use paths; however, gaps remain. While navigational signage exists in some locations, there is a need for a more comprehensive wayfinding system that improves connectivity and awareness of recreation assets. Wayfinding signage and informational kiosks should incorporate educational and interpretive elements alongside directional guidance. Key access challenges include crossing Highway 160 and improving connectivity to Reservoir Hill.

Trailhead and parking constraints—such as limited capacity, challenges for trailer parking, steep terrain, and inadequate access—were identified at Cloman Park, Reservoir Hill, and along the San Juan River corridor. At the same time, the Reservoir Hill acquisition presents a significant opportunity to expand public access, improve circulation, and support conservation objectives.

The need for developed recreation facilities, particularly a gym, aquatic facility, field and court space, and an ice rink remains an ongoing community priority. These conversations involve the Town and County, the joint recreation board, the school district, and local partners such as Skate Pagosa — a 501c3 non-profit raising money for a new multi-purpose pavilion.

A central, cross-cutting opportunity is the Town-to-Lakes Trail. Completion of this trail represents a critical missing link in Pagosa Springs' recreation network and directly addresses identified needs related to connectivity, access, and wayfinding. As a continuous corridor, it would link key assets including Reservoir Hill, Cloman Park, the San Juan River corridor, residential neighborhoods, and future developed recreation facilities. Framing the Town-to-Lakes Trail as a primary recreation and mobility spine—rather than a standalone project—would better position it for funding, partnerships, and phased implementation while advancing broader goals related to recreation, conservation, and community development.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Access Improvement** – Pave parking lot at Cloman Park to enhance summer and winter access (scheduled for spring 2026)
- * **Forest Health** – Identify forest health and fuels treatments for Cloman Park
- * **Parks and Recreation Wayfinding and Signage Plan** – joint planning regarding signage, wayfinding, and connectivity between recreation amenities and residential areas
- * **Indoor Recreation Facility** – support development of a Town and County-supported indoor recreation facility that includes strength training, multi-purpose space, indoor courts, and aquatic facilities to address strong demand for indoor recreation, youth programming, and year round family options.
- * **Trailhead Amenities** - Improve Reservoir Hill Trailhead Amenities (parking, signage, restrooms)
- * **Infrastructure Development** – Support multi-purpose pavilion and ice rink and additional field and court space for Town and School District needs. Consider additional support infrastructure (parking, restrooms, etc.) as site uses evolve.
- * **Trail Connectivity** – Continue to support Town to Lakes Trail multi-use path to increase connectivity

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * The Community Recreation Survey shows that Town parks, trails, and river access are among the most frequently used recreation destinations. Town facilities also received the highest condition ratings, though respondents noted parking, restrooms, and crowding as ongoing issues.
- * Survey results indicate meaningful use of County and Town lands alongside USFS lands and highlight infrastructure and maintenance—especially bathrooms, trail upkeep, and parking—as top priorities.
- * Task Force members identified Cloman Park as an important disc-golf, hiking, biking, and Nordic skiing site, but one with winter parking and mud problems, legacy forest-health work that needs retreatment, and residual wildlife migration concerns.

- * The Archuleta County Regional PROST plan and Colorado SCORP both support improving in-town parks, enhancing river access, and building connected trail networks that link neighborhoods to parks and nearby public lands, while integrating wildfire, climate, and habitat considerations into park design and maintenance.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes – concentrates development at existing town and county recreation nodes, integrates forest health and fuels treatments, and limits pressure on more sensitive lands through better access planning.

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves parking, trailhead amenities, wayfinding, and connected trail access while also expanding indoor and year-round recreation opportunities for youth, families, and older adults.

Thriving & Connected Communities - links parks, neighborhoods, schools, and public lands through the Town-to-Lakes Trail and other facility improvements that build a more connected recreation network.

EAST FORK CORRIDOR PLAN

Background

The East Fork corridor is a popular area for camping, off-road vehicles, fishing, and river activities. East Fork Road (National Forest System Road 667) provides access to several trailheads, including Sand Creek, Silver Falls, and Quartz Creek and is a throughway to the Elwood pass area, a well-known OHV trail. East Fork contains several dispersed camping sites, as well as the East Fork campground, a developed campground with approximately 26 sites.

In recent years, the East Fork Corridor has seen issues with trash, litter, high vehicle speeds, erosion, sedimentation, and soil impacts from dispersed camping areas. Other recreation management concerns include trailers and RV's creating traffic issues on the narrow road, poor road conditions, length-of-stay violations in camping areas, disputes over dispersed camping areas, and inadequate restroom and trash facilities. Traffic congestion and parking challenges are especially prevalent in the first 3-4 miles of East Fork Road.

In the winter, the East Fork corridor provides access for snowmobiling as well as non-motorized recreation, including snowshoeing, classic skiing, and snowmobile-assisted backcountry ski tours. While the corridor offers a relatively moderate grade, its low elevation and mixed-use patterns make it less suitable for formal grooming. As a result, winter use is generally informal, with users accessing the area based on individual preferences and conditions rather than designated or managed trail systems.

The variety of management concerns and resource health impacts throughout the East Fork Corridor have been acknowledged by the Forest Service and partners such as Trout Unlimited and Upper San Juan WEP. While an easement across private property at the beginning of East Fork Road is held by Archuleta County, the majority of East Fork Road within National Forest System lands is under U.S. Forest Service jurisdiction, including segments located in Mineral County.

Traffic, vehicle speeds, dust, and road maintenance are ongoing concerns along the corridor, particularly near the entrance. Addressing these issues will require Forest Service coordination and a corridor-wide study to evaluate recreation use and resource management holistically.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Dispersed Camping Management** - Evaluate opportunities for designated dispersed camping to reduce soil impacts, natural resource degradation, and manage visitation pressure.
- * **Campground Expansion** - Evaluate the potential to expand East Fork Campground
- * **Parking Improvements** - Improve parking and accessibility at lower trailhead areas while limiting oversized vehicles and RV access farther up the road to reduce congestion, improve safety, protect natural resources, and maintain adequate turnaround space for emergency access and traffic flow.
- * **Road Drainage and Bank Stabilization** - Upgrade road drainage (ditches, rolling dips, culverts) and stabilize eroding banks and riparian areas to reduce water quality impairment.
- * **Enforcement & Management** – Identify resources to enforce speed limits, stay limits, increase trash and human waste management capacity. Evaluate need to limit access to Quartz Meadows.
- * **Waste Management** - Provide more trash and human waste receptacles to reduce environmental impacts
- * **Trail Maintenance** – Enhance non-motorized trails in the area to enhance user experience, trail sustainability
- * **Aquatic Health Studies** – Continue to monitor aquatic health to determine baselines and track progress as drainage, waste, and erosion management measures are implemented

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Survey respondents highlighted crowding, trash, human waste, and trail maintenance issues as key issues diminishing recreation quality, with several comments calling for more toilets and trash receptacles.
- * Task Force and agency partners, including USFS, Upper San Juan WEP, Trout Unlimited, Audubon, and OHV users have expressed support for a corridor-wide management plan that formalizes dispersed camping, improves restrooms and trash

service, addresses erosion and sedimentation, and considers vehicle size/speed management.

- * The Archuleta County Regional Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Master Plan and Colorado’s SCORP both emphasize protecting riparian corridors, improving infrastructure (parking, waste, signage) in high-use areas, and using collaborative planning to address recreation impacts to wildlife and aquatic habitat.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - addresses erosion, sedimentation, bank stability, water quality, and the impacts of unmanaged dispersed camping through a corridor-wide management approach.

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves trailhead parking, restroom and trash service, and trail maintenance while organizing use more effectively to reduce conflict and resource damage.

Thriving & Connected Communities - creates a clearer, safer, and more predictable recreation experience for campers, anglers, OHV users, and winter users.

EDUCATION PROGRAMMING & INFORMATION

Background

Education and outreach are critical tools for managing recreation impacts, reducing resource damage, minimizing user conflicts, and fostering a stewardship ethic among both residents and visitors. As recreation use has intensified across the study area, many of the management challenges identified by stakeholders—trash and human waste, wildlife disturbance, user conflicts, social trail proliferation, wildfire risk, invasive species spread, and lack of awareness about regulations—can be partially addressed through strategic, coordinated education initiatives.

Currently, education programming and information related to conservation and natural resource management are fragmented across multiple organizations. While each entity provides valuable information to its audiences, there is no unified education strategy, consistent messaging, or shared brand identity that helps residents and visitors understand expected behaviors and resource protection principles across jurisdictional boundaries.

The Education and Information subcommittee of the PTF discussed developing a “PARC” branded education series that could include seasonal workshops, interpretive events (such as Wednesday Wellness Walks and Earth Day activities), educational signage at trailheads and high-use areas, online content (articles, videos, social media) hosted across partner websites using unified branding. Other informational tools that

were discussed included a new homeowner orientation booklet that provided information about noxious weeds, fire risk, light pollution, waste management, and wildlife awareness.

The success of education initiatives will depend on coordination across partner organizations and land management agencies so that locals and visitors receive consistent, clear, and reinforcing messages regardless of which land manager or organization they encounter. The PARC website can act as an information aggregator for recreation and conservation information.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **PARC-Branded Education Series** - A coordinated program of seasonal workshops, guided outings, and community events covering topics such as trail etiquette, avalanche safety, wildlife awareness, wildfire preparedness, shooting-recreation overlap, riparian habitat, forest health, water conservation, dark sky protection, dog management, user conflict reduction on multi-use trails, and invasive species identification.
- * **Coordinated Information Sharing** - Create shared online and print content using consistent branding that can be deployed across partner websites and social media channels
- * **Trailhead Signage and Kiosks** - Develop consistent, visually appealing educational signage at all major trailheads covering regulations, etiquette, wildlife awareness, forest health information, and emergency contact information
- * **Online Content Hub** - Create centralized websites with educational resources and interactive maps relating to responsible recreation and conservation initiatives.
- * **Orientation Guide** - Develop new homeowner welcome kits with information about recreation opportunities, responsible use, fire mitigation, wildlife coexistence, and community expectations
- * **Forest Health Education** - Partner with San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership to develop interpretive signage at fuel treatment sites (Reservoir Hill, Cloman Park, Turkey Springs) explaining wildfire risk, prescribed fire, habitat enhancement, and WUI management.
- * **Ambassador Programs** - Recruit, train, and deploy volunteer ambassadors at high-use trailheads to provide friendly, real-time education about regulations, etiquette, safety, and resource protection
- * **Hunting Education** - Create targeted messaging for both hunters and non-hunters about safety during hunting seasons, blaze orange recommendations, area closures, and mutual respect
- * **Agricultural and Grazing Awareness** - Develop education materials explaining the working landscape, livestock grazing on public lands, proper gate etiquette, and respecting ranching operations
- * **Multi-Use Trail Etiquette** - Create clear, visual materials explaining yielding protocols, safe passing procedures, and conflict reduction strategies

- * **Invasive Species Education** - Partner with Archuleta County Weed and Pest to educate recreationists about seed dispersal, cleaning gear and vehicles, and identifying priority invasive species
- * **Water Quality Protection** - Develop messaging about camping setbacks from water sources, proper human waste disposal, streambank protection, and aquatic habitat sensitivity

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * The Community Recreation Survey identified lack of awareness about available opportunities and rules, poor etiquette (trash, dog waste), and crowding as major barriers and quality-of-experience issues, with many respondents calling explicitly for better educational resources.
- * PTF discussions highlighted fragmented messaging across agencies and groups, the need for consistent etiquette and safety information (e.g., fires, forest health, wildlife, dogs, e-bikes), and opportunities for PARC-branded education campaigns and ambassador programs.
- * The 2025 Colorado SCORP emphasizes education, stewardship, and volunteer engagement as core strategies for reducing recreation impacts and calls out Regional Partnerships like PARC as key vehicles for delivering consistent messaging on access, closures, and responsible recreation.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - provides consistent messaging to reduce wildlife disturbance, human-caused impacts, invasive species spread, and recreation-related damage to forests, water, and habitat.

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation – develops approachable and consistent etiquette, regulation, and safety information

Thriving & Connected Communities - creates a shared PARC brand and coordinated communication network that helps agencies, partners, residents, and visitors work from the same playbook

MOUNTAIN BIKE-OPTIMIZED TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Background

Hiking and equestrian use are foundational to the Pagosa area and are supported across many existing routes. This plan recognizes the importance of maintaining these shared-use opportunities, improving trail conditions, and exploring new connections that serve hikers and equestrians. However, a focus on mountain bike–optimized trail development reflects a specific and growing demand for purpose-built bike

experiences, which can help improve user experience, reduce conflicts, and better distribute recreation use across the system.

Mountain biking opportunities within the study area are concentrated in Turkey Springs, Reservoir Hill, Dakota Springs, sections of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail¹², and the Treasure Mountain Trail. Existing trail experiences include flatter, tamer, more beginner-friendly trails and long, steep, technical, advanced trails. There is a notable gap of intermediate trails and purpose-built mountain bike trails that create opportunities for progression. Trails such as the Treasure Mountain Trail are primarily done via shuttle, illustrating a gap of loop experiences for more advanced riders.

Currently, mountain bike riders who want varied terrain, purpose-built descents, and opportunities for progression travel outside of the study area.

Planning for the development of a sustainable, purpose-built trail, progressive system requires thoughtful consideration of terrain, wildlife, natural resources, and other trail users. User conflicts in areas such as Turkey Springs and East Fork underscore this importance and illustrate how recreation planning and trail design can mitigate conflicts and enhance experiences for all recreationalists. In these areas, user separation does not exist and high-speed interactions with equestrians and pedestrians can be dangerous for all parties. In these cases, user education also plays an important role, as respectful etiquette can prevent negative interactions.

New, sustainably and thoughtfully built, mountain bike trails would address some of the existing system gaps and reduce user conflicts. Creating optimized bike trails will also increase user diversity by providing youth opportunities, accommodating Class 1 e-bikes, and separate users as desired. Trail development proposals must consider wildlife corridors, terrain, user conflict, and sustainable trail design principles. Due to these factors, as well as proximity to town, discussions have focused on Turkey Springs, Coyote Hill, and Chris Mountain.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Trail Development** - Advance a stacked-loop, bike-optimized trail system that fills the current gap in purpose-built riding and progressive riding areas. This includes the development of progressive loops (beginner, lower-intermediate, intermediate/advanced) with modern trail features—rollable berms, grade reversals, and optional technical lines—built to sustainable grades and soils. Use wildlife corridor and CODEX habitat mapping to locate new trails outside of the key migration corridors, incorporating seasonal closures or quiet zones where needed.

¹² The only section of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail within the analysis area accessible to mountain bikes for any loop opportunities are the 19 miles between the Lobo overlook/Wolf Creek Pass area, south/east to Elwood Pass

- * **User Experience** - Embed clear trail-rating and use-designation signage at every junction and trailhead so riders can choose appropriate routes and other users can avoid bike-heavy segments if desired.
- * **User Experience** - Continue to support education initiatives around trail etiquette to mitigate user conflict.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * The Community Recreation Survey identifies MTB-optimized trails among the top outdoor amenities residents would like to see more of alongside non-motorized trails and multi-use paths
- * DUST2 has expressed interest in supporting planning, construction, and stewardship for bike-optimized trails, while also acknowledging the need to avoid migration routes and minimize winter and wildlife impacts.
- * Colorado's Outdoors Strategy emphasizes "Exceptional Outdoor Recreation Experiences" including close to home and statewide opportunities that meet diverse needs and interests. The Turkey Springs and Coyote Hill areas provide opportunities to improve recreation experiences for all users by diversifying trail experiences, separating users, and reducing fragmentation of the landscape by developing trails in a concentrated use zone.
- * Colorado's SCORP and Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind emphasize using collaborative, science-based planning—integrating COTREX, CODEX, and local habitat data—to locate new trail systems away from critical habitats, decommission unsustainable social trails, and improve maintenance on core networks.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes – considers trail development within wildlife habitat context and encourages building to sustainable grades and soils to reduce long-term ecological impacts and maintenance requirements

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation – helps fill a recreation experience gap related to purpose-built, progressive mountain bike experiences and creates user separation where appropriate.

Thriving & Connected Communities - supports a broader range of recreation opportunities for youth, families, and riders who currently travel elsewhere for this kind of experience

OHV CONNECTIVITY

Background

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation is a significant part of the study area's recreation landscape. The study area contains approximately 579 miles of trails open to motorized travel, representing 53% of the total trail network. These routes provide access to high-elevation terrain, remote camping areas, fishing access, and scenic destinations such as Elwood Pass.

One of the main identified issues is that small gaps in the motorized trail network are significantly impacting connectivity. Additionally, some connecting segments cross private land without formal access agreements, creating uncertainty about long-term access.

Establishing strategic connectivity segments would create safer, more enjoyable loop experiences for OHV users while reducing road use and associated impacts. Securing and formalizing access will require coordination with Archuleta County, private landowners, user groups, and the Forest Service.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Secure Limited Road Segments and Easements** - Identify and negotiate access for key connecting segments that complete popular OHV loops, with priority on routes between Fawn Gulch, Buckles Lake, Willow Draw, and Mill Creek corridors
- * **County Road Connections** - Coordinate with Archuleta County to formalize OHV-legal county road segments that provide critical linkages, including potential redesignation of short county road sections.
- * **Staging and Parking Improvements** - Develop or enhance trailhead staging areas with adequate parking for trucks with trailers, restroom facilities, and signage
- * **Speed Management** - Work with Archuleta County to establish and enforce appropriate speed limits on county roads used by OHVs to improve safety for all users
- * **Signage and Wayfinding** - Install clear OHV route markers, width restriction signs, and educational signage about responsible riding practices and resource protection

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Community survey open-ended responses and task force feedback highlight both strong OHV demand and concerns about safety, speed, noise, dust, and resource damage near roads and shared corridors.
- * Task Force discussions have identified key county-road gaps that prevent legal, continuous OHV loops and conflicts when riders are forced onto narrow, busy road segments

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - formalizes routes, improves access, and reduces the likelihood of travel across sensitive or unauthorized areas

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves safety, route clarity, and access for OHV users through better connectivity, signage, parking, and speed management

Thriving & Connected Communities – creates formal loop opportunities that may reduce road conflict and use, improves the overall experience for motorized users

RESEVOIR HILL ACQUISITION

Background

The potential to acquire a 303-acre parcel adjacent to the existing Reservoir Hill park space represents a critical investment opportunity that would permanently protect and expand park access. The Town began exploring acquisition of the adjacent property in 2025 through the Forest Legacy Grant Program, with the goal of increasing the size and accessibility of Reservoir Hill while protecting the natural, scenic, and aquatic resources.

This project would open more than four miles of existing trails and create safer, more accessible entry points for year-round recreation. A key benefit of the acquisition is the opportunity to establish a two-way, graded road, improving access for seniors, families, and people with limited mobility who cannot comfortably use the current steep and constrained entrance.

By preventing future residential development on this property, the project would help preserve the scenic backdrop, protect wildlife habitat and watershed resources, and create additional opportunities for coordinated forest health and wildfire mitigation work in close proximity to the Town of Pagosa Springs.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Land Acquisition and Permanent Public Access** – Pursue acquisition of the 303-acre parcel to secure permanent public access, expand Reservoir Hill Park, and open existing private trails for community use.
- * **Trail Access and Trailhead Development** – Evaluate new access points, trailhead parking, signage, and orientation improvements to better distribute use and reduce pressure on the existing steep entrance and limited parking areas.

- * **Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience** -- Integrate fuels reduction, forest thinning, and forest health education into future site planning, building on local interest in using Reservoir Hill as a model for recreation-compatible wildfire mitigation and public education.
- * **Recreation Management Planning** — Prepare a site-specific recreation management or master planning effort to guide trail use, conservation protections, event use, parking, accessibility, and future improvements across the expanded park footprint.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Task Force and working group discussions identified Reservoir Hill as one of the Town's signature close-to-home recreation assets, valued for hiking, biking, disc golf, sledding, events, and views, while also noting ongoing issues with steep access, limited parking, and the need for better connectivity and wayfinding
- * Earlier local planning also supports this direction: the Archuleta County Regional Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Master Plan identifies Reservoir Hill as one of the community's most important park resources and recommends improving connectivity from downtown, wayfinding, conservation of site resources, and evaluation of additional property acquisition.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - permanently protects open space, wildlife habitat, watershed resources, and scenic values while creating opportunities for coordinated forest health and wildfire mitigation

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - expands public access, improves trailhead circulation, and creates safer, more accessible entry points for seniors, families, and people with limited mobility

Thriving & Connected Communities - preserves and expands a close-to-home recreation asset and links it more effectively to nearby trails and town recreation areas

SAN JUAN RIVER RECREATION & HABITAT PLAN

Background

The San Juan River corridor through and near the Town of Pagosa Springs is a heavily used recreation destination. The river provides opportunities for fishing, kayaking, tubing, rafting, and wildlife viewing, with the highest concentrations of use occurring between May and September.

Tubing has become more popular in recent years, with summer weekends often seeing hundreds of tubers on the most accessible reaches near downtown. This concentration of use has raised concerns about fish habitat impacts, crowding, user conflicts, and degraded experiences for other river users such as anglers and kayakers. The Town of Pagosa Springs and partners including the Upper San Juan Water Enhancement Partnership (WEP) have completed restoration work and access improvements in recent years.

Key challenges include limited access points, inadequate facilities at high-use locations, declining fish habitat quality in heavily used reaches due to sedimentation and bank erosion, deadfall creating hazardous boating conditions, and the need for better education about river etiquette, water safety, and habitat protection.

Opportunities exist to expand and formalize upstream public access points to disperse use away from the most crowded downtown reaches, implement habitat improvement projects, install amenities at key access points, and create educational messaging that encourages responsible river use.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Expand and Formalize Upstream Access Points** - Identify and develop new put-in locations upstream of downtown to disperse tubing and boating pressure away from the most crowded reaches. Given the extent of private land upstream of Pagosa Springs, this effort should also include education and outreach for river users and adjacent landowners regarding private property boundaries and appropriate recreational use. Opportunities include signage at put-ins, targeted messaging on river etiquette, and support for willing landowners to install informational signage on or near their properties.
- * **River Access Improvements** - Continue work at River Park Boat Ramp (former Bob's LP site), South Yamaguchi, and East Gateway River Park to improve parking, staging, and access infrastructure. Identify management strategies to disperse use, protect fish habitat, and balance outfitter, angler, and casual tubing experiences along the San Juan River
- * **River Health and Recreation Management** – Establish a coordinated approach to managing increasing recreational use through downtown Pagosa Springs that prioritizes river health and user safety. This could include developing criteria for

commercial and/or voluntary river closures during sensitive periods (e.g., low flows, high temperatures, spawning seasons), in coordination with CPW. Implementation would likely require expanded water quality and use monitoring to inform adaptive management and ensure measures are effective and feasible for the community.

- * **Aquatic Habitat Restoration** - Partner with Upper San Juan WEP, Trout Unlimited, and CPW to improve aquatic species habitat. Actions may include in-channel enhancements, habitat connectivity improvements, and/or creation or protection of cold-water refugia, with a focus on supporting long-term resilience of the San Juan River system and its tributaries in the face of climate change, drought, and flood variability.
- * **Riparian Restoration** - Implement streambank stabilization, native vegetation planting, and erosion control projects to improve water quality, habitat conditions, and floodplain function. Efforts should also support broader watershed resilience by enhancing riparian health along the San Juan River and priority tributaries with recreational value.
- * **Deadfall Removal Program** - Coordinate removal of hazardous woody debris that creates dangerous boating conditions while retaining important large wood for fish habitat
- * **Water Quality Monitoring** - Establish baseline monitoring and ongoing assessment of water quality parameters in heavily used river reaches to track recreation impacts
- * **River Use Education and Outreach** – Expand education and outreach efforts focused on responsible river use, including safety (e.g., PFD use), minimizing conflicts between user groups (e.g., anglers and tubers), and reducing impacts such as litter and disposable container use. This could include coordinated messaging, signage at access points, and partnerships with local organizations and outfitters.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Survey respondents rated water activities such as rafting, tubing, and kayaking among the most popular summer activities, and many open-ended comments identified the San Juan River corridor as a core part of their recreation experience.
- * Local partners—including Upper San Juan WEP, Audubon, Trout Unlimited, outfitters, and the Town—have already collaborated on restoration and access projects and expressed interest in combining future river access improvements with in-channel habitat work and riparian restoration.
- * The Archuleta County Regional PROST plan and Town-to-Lakes Trail Master Plan call for protecting and enhancing river corridors as both recreation and conservation assets, while SCORP’s “Land, Water and Wildlife Conservation” priority supports projects that improve aquatic habitat and concentrate high-use recreation at well-designed access points.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - restores riparian areas, improves water quality, and protects aquatic habitat in a heavily used river corridor

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - disperses use through additional access points, improves river access infrastructure, and pairs recreation management with safety and etiquette messaging

Thriving & Connected Communities - balances the needs of anglers, tubers, paddlers, outfitters, and casual users so the river remains an asset for both visitors and residents

SHOOTING RANGE SITING

Background

Shooting sports and hunting are strong components of the study area recreation economy. However, the study area economy has no formal shooting range for training and firearms safety education, leading to more dispersed shooting on National Forest and other public lands. While dispersed shooting is a traditional and legitimate recreational use, it creates several challenges including safety concerns in high-use recreation areas (particularly Turkey Springs and Mill Creek Road), wildfire risk during high fire danger periods, noise impacts on nearby residents and other recreationists, lead and debris contamination at informal shooting sites, conflicts with wildlife (particularly during critical habitat periods), and user conflicts with hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and campers.

Wolf Creek Gun & Bow – a local shooting and archery organization (501(c)(3)) – has been advocating for a formal shooting range to address these gaps. A controlled, well-designed, and regulated facility could offer both firearms and archery opportunities while minimizing environmental and community impacts. The proposed site would include a number of safety and environmental considerations, as funding allows, such as designated shooting lanes, backstops, range safety officers, fire suppression equipment, and lead management protocols. Wolf Creek Gun & Bow have been working with Forest Service and CPW staff to identify a location that meets certain siting considerations relating to acreage, topography, distance from residential areas, compatibility with surrounding land uses, accessibility, and utilities. So far, there has been limited success in finding an appropriate site. Given the strong public support and the safety, recreational, and economic impacts of a potential shooting range, identifying and acquiring a site is of high importance.

From a safety and enforcement perspective, informal shooting sites can generate frequent calls to dispatch from recreationists and nearby residents who may be unable to distinguish between legal target shooting, unsafe behavior, or potential active

incidents. These reports often require law enforcement response, patrol verification, and in some cases coordination with search and rescue or fire personnel, diverting limited public safety resources away from higher-priority incidents. This is particularly true in higher-use recreation corridors such as Turkey Springs and Mill Creek Road, where overlapping uses increase uncertainty and perceived risk. In addition, repeated responses to dispersed sites can strain staffing capacity, increase response times elsewhere in the county, and create avoidable operational costs. These safety and response challenges are compounded during high fire danger periods, when even routine calls require elevated caution and coordination due to wildfire risk.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Site Remediation** – Identify opportunities for cleanup of existing dispersed shooting areas that have seen impacts from use.
- * **Site Identification and Analysis** - Work with Wolf Creek Gun & Bow and other partners to identify potential private or public parcels that meet safety, noise, wildlife, topography, and access criteria.
- * **Land Acquisition or Partnership** - Pursue acquisition of appropriate private land, land exchange with state or federal agencies, or partnership agreements that provide long-term secure access.
- * **Community Education and Outreach** - Engage neighbors, recreationists, wildlife advocates, and other stakeholders early in the process to address concerns and build support.
- * **Range Design and Development** - Plan for firearm ranges (rifle, pistol, shotgun) and archery facilities with appropriate distances, backstops, and safety infrastructure
- * **Partnerships** - Explore partnerships with CPW (which currently has limited interest in managing additional ranges but may provide technical or funding support), counties, or private organizations

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Community Recreation Survey data shows high interest in expanding hunting and shooting sports opportunities. The survey also identifies concerns about safety, noise, and trash from dispersed target shooting on public roads and near popular recreation corridors.
- * In a survey that Wolf Creek Gun & Bow ran, over 99% of respondents supported a formal shooting range

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes – encourages more concentrated shooting activity through controlled facility that can better manage debris, lead, fire risk, and reduce wildlife disturbance

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - creates a more organized place for hunting and shooting practice, provides training opportunities, reduces reliance on unmanaged and informal sites

Thriving & Connected Communities - reduces conflict between shooters and other recreationists while supporting a legitimate and valued recreation use

TRAIL SUSTAINABILITY & EFFICIENCY

Background

Within the PARC study area, there are approximately 1,085 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails. Some of these trails see a lot of traffic and use, while others are overgrown, underutilized, and built before current sustainable trail practices. The maintenance needs for the extensive trail network have exceeded staff and funding capacity, even as volunteer groups such as PATC, SJOC, DUST2, and SJBCHA and other local organizations have dedicated significant time to trail clearing and tread maintenance.

Conversations relating to trails within Task Force discussions have focused on maintaining what we currently have, while identifying a set of opportunities to rethink, or expand, access as recreation use patterns and interests have shifted. For example, there is interest in wilderness trail development, mountain bike-optimized trail development, and e-bike allowance in the Turkey Springs area.

There are opportunities to right-size and modify the existing trail network to increase maintenance capacity, align with desired recreation experiences, and consider wildlife habitats and landscape fragmentation. Other maintenance capacity improvements involve education around trail clearing standards, ensuring that existing volunteer groups maintain trails with best practices in mind.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Trail Maintenance Plan** – Complete a system-wide trail assessment that evaluates trail condition and resource concerns. Establish trail maintenance priorities that balance use levels, deferred maintenance, and stated trail management objectives.
- * **Trail Maintenance Standards Guide** – Develop booklet or informational handout about trail tread and trail clearing standards for volunteer organizations.

- * **User-Created Trail Management** – Close and restore user-created trails and communicate presence of official alignments
- * **Trail Adjustments** – **In areas where conflicts are persistent, explore small-scale realignments, directional loops, or separated access.**
- * **Trail Maintenance Funding** – Work with local stakeholders and partner groups to identify and raise funds for hiring crews, purchasing equipment, and increasing trail maintenance capacity.
- * **Trail Maintenance Partnerships** - Formalize maintenance roles for PATC, DUST2, San Juan Back Country Horsemen, San Juan Outdoor Club, Pagosa Nordic Club, and OHV groups, through task agreements or annual work plans tied to the prioritized maintenance list.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * PARC Community Recreation Survey - respondents ranked protecting natural resources and wildlife, improving trail maintenance, and addressing crowding and infrastructure gaps (toilets, trash, parking) near the top of their priorities. Comments also highlighted concerns about social trails, muddy or rutted routes, and unmanaged dispersed use degrading both experience and habitat.
- * Task Force members discuss the importance of focusing enhancements on existing networks before major expansion, unsustainable legacy trails, user created trails, and the need for more systematic maintenance.
- * Colorado’s SCORP and Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind both recommend focusing on quality over quantity, consolidating use in appropriate zones, and decommissioning unsustainable routes as a core strategy for balancing recreation demand with wildlife and watershed health.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - prioritizes maintenance, closes user-created routes, and reduces trail impacts in sensitive or overused areas

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves trail conditions, clarifies maintenance standards, and creates a more durable and user-friendly trail network

Thriving & Connected Communities –leverages volunteer partnerships more effectively and focuses staff and funding

TURKEY SPRINGS & COYOTE HILL – USE MANAGEMENT

Background

Turkey Springs is located approximately 9 miles northwest of the Town of Pagosa Springs, about a 15-minute drive from downtown. Turkey Springs is the closest major trail system to the Town of Pagosa Springs and has access points at the Newt Jack and Turkey Springs trailheads, as well as several other private access points permissible for use by PLPOA residents. Just to the west of Turkey Springs are important elk and deer migration corridors and the Piedra Area.

Turkey Springs contains over 30 miles of non-motorized and motorized trail corridors and is well utilized by hikers, bikers, equestrians, and OHV users. Active grazing leases and fuels projects are also found in this area. The proximity to town and the mix of uses have contributed to some user conflicts, including conflicts between hikers and bikers, conflicts between bikers and equestrians, and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. During rifle season, shooting activity in the area can also be a concern. In addition, there have been some issues with proper etiquette relating to cattle guards and gates. The area is also experiencing issues with user-created social trails, created by both motorized and non-motorized users. Many of the motorized social trails are related to dispersed camping. These social trails impact natural resources and contribute to navigation issues.

From a user amenity standpoint, there is a lack of restrooms and trash receptacles that have created litter and human waste issues. In addition, parking is limited and can be challenging to navigate for users with horse trailers. Although currently prohibited on non-motorized trails, there is interest in allowing Class 1 E-biking in this area.

The Turkey Springs area is a high-priority fuels management area and a common location for lightning-ignited fires, requiring ongoing preparedness and response planning. Timber operations and fuels treatments in the area have the ability to impact recreation experiences, underscoring the importance of education and communication around forestry projects and fire risk.

There are several conservation and recreation-related initiatives to be pursued in the Turkey Springs area to manage user conflict, reduce litter and human waste issues, mitigate impacts to wildlife corridors, provide desired recreation experiences, and reduce impacts to natural resources.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Trail Management** - Explore E-Bike allowances, social trail closures, directional travel. In addition, develop a social trail management strategy that inventories user-created routes, closes and rehabilitates unsustainable alignments, and adopts a limited set of desirable connections into the official system.

- * **Trail Management (Winter Use Coordination)** – Evaluate opportunities to better define winter motorized and non-motorized use areas within the Turkey Springs system to reduce user conflicts, noise impacts, and resource disturbance
- * **Waste Management** - Install year-round trash receptacles and dog-waste stations at primary trailheads. Install vault toilets or ADA-accessible restrooms at Turkey Springs trailhead and create maintenance plans for new amenities.
- * **Access Management** - Coordinate with PLPOA to formalize public trailhead access at selected gates, including signed public parking areas, hours, and use expectations that respect adjacent neighborhoods and reduce social trails
- * **Forest Health** - Integrate Turkey Springs fuels treatments and Ponderosa pine restoration with trail planning, using temporary closures, reroutes, or interpretive signage to explain “working forest” objectives to recreation users
- * **Signage and Education** - Replace signage, provide trail ratings, develop education initiatives regarding shooting awareness, litter, human waste, dog waste, timber and fuels programs, and cattle gates and guards
- * **Dispersed Camping Management - Establish** designated dispersed camping zones and site standards to minimize impacts

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Survey respondents identified Turkey Springs as a top location needing better management, citing missing/vandalized signage, erosion, overuse, motorized vs. non-motorized conflicts, and a desire for more technical mountain-bike experiences.
- * Task Force members have described Turkey Springs as “Pagosa’s backyard playground,” with year-round local use across many activities (camping, OHV, MTB, hunting, equestrian, dog walking), but also recurring problems with off-leash dogs, social trails, trash, human waste, and user conflicts on shared roads and trails.
- * Stakeholders expressed broad support for focusing on trail maintenance and realignment, adding restrooms and trash facilities, clarifying e-bike policy, and using tools like directional travel, trail ratings, and selective closures to improve safety and sustainability.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - reduces social trails, improves waste management, integrates fuels treatments, and protects wildlife corridors and working lands through better site management

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation – reduces user-created trail segments, adds restrooms and trash facilities, and improves signage

Thriving & Connected Communities – manages access to, and experience in, a popular, close-to-home recreation area to improve the experience for locals and visitors

WEST FORK

Background

The West Fork corridor provides access to trails, fishing, dispersed camping, and backcountry recreation off Highway 160. West Fork Campground offers developed camping opportunities; it is adjacent to the West Fork Trailhead, and the West Fork Trail allows hiking and equestrian use. In addition, the Bruce Spruce Campground located on Bruce Spruce Ranch property provides developed camping and fishing opportunities. In winter, the West Fork area provides terrain suitable for snowshoeing and Nordic skiing.

Limited parking, road conditions, trail maintenance, and winter trailhead access in the winter are ongoing key management issues. In the fall of 2025, a severe flooding event damaged several trail and road bridge structures and several miles of trail in this area.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Parking Expansion** - Expand parking capacity at West Fork to accommodate trucks with trailers, horse trailers, and winter users.
- * **Trailhead Facilities** - Install vault toilet at West Fork Trailhead and provide trash receptacles or pack-in/pack-out signage and infrastructure
- * **Trail Maintenance** – Increase trail maintenance efforts for West Fork trails in addition to ongoing tree clearing and brushing work.
- * **Winter Plowing & Grooming Coordination** - Work with Nordic Club and Mineral County to establish reliable winter access through coordinated plowing and grooming schedules.
- * **Winter Travel Management Planning** – Support the Forest Service in completing and implementing a comprehensive Winter Travel Management Plan to establish clear designations for motorized and non-motorized use areas, improve user clarity, and reduce conflicts across the corridor.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Stakeholders noted ongoing parking and access challenges, as well as the need to better account for private property boundaries, access rights, and potential conflicts between adjacent landowners and public recreation use.
- * Pagosa Nordic Club, snowmobile groups, outfitters, and local residents have supported targeted improvements at West Fork (e.g., parking expansion, road maintenance, signing, winter grooming) to relieve pressure on Wolf Creek Pass winter recreation areas.
- * Proposed actions at West Fork align with SCORP guidance to prioritize operations, maintenance, and infrastructure upgrades at existing high-use areas, and to use collaborative regional partnerships to coordinate across agencies for funding and implementation.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes - improves trail stewardship, winter access planning, and corridor maintenance

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - expands parking and trailhead amenities to the area can better serve summer and winter recreationists

Thriving & Connected Communities - relieves pressure on other winter recreation areas and improves access for both local residents and visitors

WOLF CREEK CORRIDOR – WINTER RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Background

Wolf Creek Pass on U.S. Highway 160 is the primary gateway to winter recreation in the northeastern portion of the study area. In most years, terrain around the pass receives substantial snowfall annually and provides access to exceptional terrain for backcountry skiing, Nordic skiing, and snowmobiling. Wolf Creek Ski Area operates on the north side of the pass and has opportunities for downhill skiing and Nordic skiing. It attracts local and non-local visitors to the study area and is a major driver for winter visitation in the region. As snowfall become more erratic, Wolf Creek Pass is seeing higher winter recreation pressure as many lower-elevation trail areas are not seeing adequate coverage.

Multiple trailheads along the pass provide access to National Forest lands managed by both the Pagosa Ranger District (south side) and the Divide Ranger District (north side). Popular winter access points include Fall Creek Trailhead, which serves as a primary access point for Nordic skiers; Lobo Overlook Trailhead, used by snowshoers and backcountry skiers; and various pullouts along the pass that provide informal access to backcountry terrain.

Key issues identified by stakeholders include user conflicts and inadequate parking at trailheads along the pass, especially for vehicles with trailers. Other topics for consideration in this area include long-term Wolf Creek Ski Area expansion plans and the potential designation of critical habitat for Canada lynx.

Opportunities & Project Components

- * **Parking Improvements** - Coordinate with the Forest Service and CDOT to improve winter access at key trailheads. Priorities include enhancing snow removal operations at Fall Creek (Forest System Road 39) as a primary Nordic access point, and evaluating potential expansion or reconfiguration of upper-elevation parking areas (e.g., Forest System Road 725, Wolf Creek Pass Summit, Lobo Trailhead, Tucker Ponds, etc.) to better distribute use and reduce congestion at lower trailheads.
- * **Designated Use Areas** - Evaluate potential for spatial or temporal separation between snowmobile and non-motorized use to reduce conflicts
- * **Winter Travel Management Planning** – Support the Forest Service in completing and implementing a comprehensive Winter Travel Management Plan to establish clear designations for motorized and non-motorized use areas, improve user clarity, and reduce conflicts across the corridor, with an emphasis on clearly designating recreation access areas on the SJNF side of Wolf Creek Pass.
- * **Unified Signage Program** - Install consistent, clear signage at all Wolf Creek Pass trailheads communicating shared-use etiquette, user responsibilities, including clear identification of designated motorized vs. non-motorized access points.
- * **Cross-District Coordination** - Establish formal coordination between Pagosa and Divide Ranger Districts and coordinate with SLV GO! Regional Partnership, as well as the Rio Grande National Forest to align with its Winter Travel Management Plan, including implications for groomed Nordic trails and track systems
- * **CDOT Partnership** - Engage CDOT on parking management solutions, potential pullout expansions, plowing coordination, and highway safety improvements
- * **Ski Resort Expansion Coordination** – As Wolf Creek Ski Area moves forward with expansion proposals, consider impacts to other recreation users
- * **Canada Lynx and Wolverine Habitat Protection** - Incorporate wildlife specialist input and potential critical habitat designations into future planning, recognizing Wolf Creek Pass as a key linkage area for the Canada lynx and the SJNF as a potential release zone for wolverine, and coordinate with agencies such as CPW to align management approaches.
- * **Winter Recreation Monitoring Expansion** - Support expanded monitoring programs to better understand use patterns, conflicts, and management needs
- * **High-Elevation Nordic Opportunities (Partnership-Based)** – Explore opportunities to partner with willing private landowners to develop higher-elevation Nordic skiing or groomed trail opportunities (e.g., in areas such as the Piedra Valley). These efforts could help reduce pressure on lower-elevation, mixed-use corridors and provide more reliable snow conditions while minimizing user conflicts.

Engagement Feedback & Plan Alignment

- * Survey comments and PTF discussion highlight recurring conflicts between snowmobiles and Nordic skiers (e.g., snowmobiles impacting groomed tracks at Fall Creek) and parking shortages at multiple trailheads
- * PTF discussions have acknowledged emerging wildlife considerations, including potential critical habitat for Canada lynx near the pass and the importance of involving biologists and resource specialists.
- * Colorado's SCORP and "Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind" call for outcome-based, cross-jurisdictional winter travel planning that incorporates wildlife needs, uses seasonal closures where appropriate, and improves infrastructure and information in designated recreation zones.

Connection to Guiding Principles

Healthy & Resilient Landscapes – creates more clear opportunities and facilities for winter use, reducing dispersed winter use impacts

Sustainable & Accessible Recreation - improves clarity for motorized and non-motorized users and coordinates grooming and access

Thriving & Connected Communities – reduces potential user conflict and improves coordinated stewardship across partners

CHAPTER 7: PLAN PRIORITIZATION

The PARC project prioritization framework is intended to provide a balanced and transparent decision-making tool that helps evaluate projects based on regional values, long-term community benefit, and overall sustainability. Projects are assessed for their ability to create meaningful regional impact while recognizing the level of effort, coordination, and capacity required for implementation. Consideration is also given to project feasibility, including funding readiness, partnership opportunities, planning progress, and the likelihood of successful completion.

The framework prioritizes projects that respond to demonstrated community needs and reflect strong stakeholder support developed through ongoing collaboration with local governments, land managers, user groups, organizations, and community members. Equal importance is placed on projects that protect and enhance biodiversity, ecological resilience, wildlife habitat, water resources, and overall conservation outcomes across the PARC landscape.

In addition, the framework encourages projects that improve accessibility, inclusivity, and equitable recreation opportunities for a diverse range of residents and visitors. Long-term sustainability is also a key consideration, ensuring projects can be responsibly maintained, managed, and adapted over time while continuing to support the broader goals of healthy landscapes, sustainable recreation, and thriving connected communities.

The PARC Project Task Force (PTF) played a key role in guiding the development of the project list framework through collaboration among partner agencies, land managers, local governments, stakeholder groups, and community representatives. The framework was created to support a more transparent and coordinated approach to evaluating projects while recognizing limited land availability, finite funding, increasing recreation pressures, and the need to protect natural resources over the long term. Through this process, the PTF helped identify projects that provide the greatest regional benefit while promoting efficient use of partnerships, funding opportunities, and management capacity. The framework is intended to guide PLC and regional partners toward collaborative, balanced decision-making that supports sustainable recreation, conservation, community needs, and long-term stewardship across the PARC landscape. This priority ranking matrix (Table 7) is subject to change as projects progress, new data is considered, and the funding landscape continues to evolve. A live version of the [Project Priority Ranking Matrix is available here](#). An overview of the scoring criteria and descriptions is provided for context.

PARC'S PROJECT PRIORITY FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

The Project Priority Framework provides a consistent method for evaluating and prioritizing projects that support the guiding principles of the PARC Plan. The framework is intended to identify projects that provide meaningful long-term benefits to recreation, conservation, community well-being, and regional collaboration while ensuring projects are feasible, sustainable, and broadly supported.

Alignment with the PARC Plan (20)

Projects should clearly align with the PARC Plan by supporting conservation, recreation, community development, and management priorities. They should protect and enhance wildlife corridors, aquatic habitats, forests, and working lands while improving recreation access, amenities, connectivity, and overall user experience. Strong projects also contribute to community quality of life by supporting stewardship, safety, local partnerships, and economic vitality. In addition, they should help address overcrowding, maintenance needs, resource impacts, and long-term sustainability through coordinated planning, education, and responsible management.

Alignment with the PARC Guiding Principles (30)

- 1. Healthy & Resilient Landscapes:** Conserve and restore interconnected ecosystems to support biodiversity, wildlife, and long-term climate resilience. Ensure outdoor spaces are sustainably managed so natural resources thrive alongside responsible human use for future generations.
- 2. Sustainable & Accessible Recreation:** Provide a diverse range of high-quality outdoor recreation opportunities that are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to all. Promote stewardship, minimize impacts to natural resources, and support active lifestyles and physical and mental well-being.
- 3. Thriving & Connected Communities:** Strengthen community well-being and the outdoor recreation economy through partnerships and collaboration among agencies, organizations, businesses, and user groups. Projects should foster shared stewardship, regional connectivity, and a strong sense of place for residents and visitors.

Regional Impact (30)

Demonstrates broad stakeholder support and long-term benefits to PARC natural lands, water, wildlife, working farms, and ranches while advancing Colorado's Outdoors Strategy. Priority is given to projects that provide strong regional impact and lasting value for natural lands, water resources, wildlife habitat, agriculture, recreation systems, and community infrastructure. Projects should demonstrate meaningful stakeholder coordination, public support, and alignment with regional and statewide outdoor priorities, as well as clearly show how they serve multiple user groups, jurisdictions, or communities and deliver benefits beyond a single organization or interest.

Feasibility and Funding Readiness (10)

Projects should demonstrate a realistic scope, achievable timeline, organizational capacity, identified partnerships, and a strong likelihood of successful implementation. Projects should include consideration for long-term operations, maintenance, stewardship, and financial sustainability to ensure investments remain viable and effective over time.

Community & Stakeholder Support (10)

Projects should reflect demonstrated community need through public engagement, collaboration, and responsiveness to identified regional priorities or gaps. Strong proposals will show meaningful outreach efforts, support from partners and community organizations, and clear benefits to residents and visitors.

Table 7. Project Priority Ranking Matrix

Project Name	PARC Plan Alignment	Healthy & Resilient Landscapes	Sustainable & Accessible Recreation	Thriving & Connected Communities	Regional Impact / Effort	Feasibility & Funding Readiness	Community & Stakeholder Support	Total Score
Total Possible Score	20	10	10	10	30	10	10	100
Trail Sustainability & Efficiency	19.5	8.9	9.5	9.1	26.9	8.7	9.2	92
San Juan River Recreation and Habitat Plan	19.4	9.2	9.4	9.0	26.0	8.1	9.1	90
Wildfire Ready Action Plan	18.2	9.7	7.2	8.7	27.6	8.1	9.6	89
Reservoir Hill Acquisition	18.7	9.2	8.8	8.4	25.9	8.4	9.2	89
Education Programming and Information	19.3	8.8	8.6	9.2	25.3	8.6	8.8	89
Turkey Spring Management/ Coyote Hill Trail Management	18.7	8.4	8.9	9.1	25.9	7.5	8.3	87
East Fork Corridor Plan	19.2	9.3	8.3	7.4	24.2	7.6	8.3	85
Wolf Creek Corridor-Winter Recreation Management	18.3	8.7	9.3	7.7	24.3	7.3	8.2	84
West Fork Improvements	18.1	8.1	9.3	8.4	24.2	6.8	8.3	83
OHV Connectivity	16.3	7.6	8.1	8.0	21.8	7.6	7.4	77
Town-Lakes Trail, 10th st to Great West	15.0	5.9	8.1	8.7	20.7	8.3	7.7	74
Camping & Campgrounds	16.3	8.0	7.9	6.3	20.0	6.9	7.7	73
Developed Recreation Opportunities	15.9	5.0	8.6	8.8	21.5	5.8	7.3	73
Shooting Range Siting	13.9	6.7	7.2	6.7	18.4	5.3	6.3	64

CHAPTER 8: LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The strength of PARC lies in the continued involvement and support of Task Force members, the general public, and local government entities. Moving forward, PARC will need to identify long-term funding sources and staff resources, develop MOUs with land management agencies, and formalize engagement structures. Regular meetings, information shared with local newspapers, strong web presence, and continued implementation progress will help legitimize PARC and establish the regional partnership as the go-to entity for recreation and conservation collaborative planning.

The PARC Leadership Committee and Task Force will stay intact but may shift in form and participation as PARC transitions from planning to implementation. Outside of convening Task Force members and supporting grant applications, PARC has the potential to play a key role in the following areas:

- 1. Funding Advocacy** – Continue to evaluate long-term funding pathways, including the reallocation of existing funding streams or development of new funding streams that could support recreation management and conservation initiatives.
- 2. Information Access** – the PARC website should be the first stop for information about recreation opportunities and conservation initiatives. Recreation preparedness, trail etiquette, invasive species, fire risk, and wildlife awareness should be key topics.
- 3. Volunteer Coordination** – PARC, similar to the PATC (see page 64), can help encourage and coordinate volunteer work for data collection, trail maintenance, trail clearing, information sharing, trash pickups, and more.
- 4. Forest Health Initiatives** – While primarily covered by partner organizations, PARC can play a role in forest health initiatives by sharing information about ongoing or upcoming work, **educating** visitors on the importance of forest health, and working with land management agencies to mitigate potential recreation impacts. As various projects move forward at Reservoir Hill, Cloman Park, Turkey Springs, and elsewhere in the study area, PARC can help share information between project partners and identify potential funding sources.
- 5. Signage** – Coordinating between project partners, including the Tourism Board and the Forest Service on signage initiatives is a great role for PARC. Creating inventory methods and organizing volunteers to place and replace signage throughout the study area.

- 6. Regional Collaboration** – Continue to work and partner with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and neighboring regional partnerships such as the Montelores Coalition, SCCORR, and SLV GO.
 - 7. Cross-District Coordination** – Establish formal coordination between Pagosa and Divide Ranger Districts on shared management strategies, best practices, and over-snow travel management process
 - 8. Recreation Data** – With support from partner organizations and volunteers, identify types of recreation data needed that would help inform future planning processes and create regular reporting mechanisms.
 - 9. Natural and Cultural Resource Protection** – PARC should play a strong role in forming and reviewing proposed projects to ensure that natural and cultural resources are adequately considered. Using the Atlas, as well as consulting with Forest Service and CPW resource specialists will ensure that sensitive resources are considered throughout the planning and development process. Educational initiatives will also play a key role in minimizing wildlife disturbance and protecting sensitive habitats.
 - 10. Advocating for Accessibility** – As proposals for new trails, campgrounds, and recreation facilities are developed, ensure that project partners are considering accessibility and inclusivity.
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Collaboration Success: Clear the Trails Campaign

The “Clear the Trails Campaign”, launched by the Pagosa Area Trails Council (PATC), is a collaborative stewardship effort involving the Pagosa Ranger District, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, local governments, nonprofit partners, and dedicated volunteers. Created in response to the catastrophic Engelmann spruce beetle infestation that killed up to 90% of high-elevation spruce forests, the campaign has secured more than \$800,000 in grants and matching funds since 2022 to support youth conservation crews, specialized equipment, and ongoing trail maintenance. Combined with thousands of volunteer hours, including wilderness crosscut saw teams, this partnership has cleared more than 40,000 downed trees over the past seven years. While many beetle-impacted regions have been forced to permanently close trails due to hazardous forest conditions, Pagosa's coalition continues working to maintain access to 95–100% of the region's 470-mile trail network through annual tree clearing, tread repairs or reroutes, and other essential maintenance that keeps trails safe and accessible. To keep the public informed, PATC also created pagosatrails.org, a centralized resource providing current trail conditions, maintenance updates, and closures, helping visitors plan safe recreation while promoting stewardship and volunteer engagement.

APPENDIX 1 – TASK FORCE PARTICIPANTS

PTF contacts and participation has evolved over time. This represents the current contact list as of May 2026, although participation is voluntary.

First Name	Last Name	Organization Name
Ash	Tully	Outfitter
Autumn	Anderson	SJNF-Pagosa District
Bill	Noble	San Juan Water Conservancy District
Bill	Milner	Nordic Club
Blake	Mamich	Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bob	Endres	Weminuche Audubon
Brittany	Leffel	Winter Wildlands Alliance
Brooks	Letchworth	San Juan Mountain Association
Chris	Rapp	Backcountry Snowmobile Skiers/Boarders
Cindi	Galabota	Colorado State University Extension Director
Cooper	Hopkins	Five Rivers Trout Unlimited
Danyelle	Leentjes	Upper San Juan Water Enhancement Partnership
Davey	Pitcher	Wolf Creek Ski Resort
Doug	Wiersma	San Juan Mountain Association
Driz	Cook	DUST 2
Ethan	Proud	Archuleta County Weed
Forest & Jaclyn	Bramwell	Wolf Creek Trailblazers
Gwen	Taylor	Archuleta Pagosa Springs Recreation Committee
Herb	Grover	Weminuche Audubon
James	Dickhoff	Pagosa Nordic Club/Town of Pagosa Springs
Mike	Hammon	CDOT
Jeff	Reichel	Avid Outdoor Recreationalist
Jennie	Green	Pagosa Tourism Board
Jo Ann	Pogreba-Dykstra	Wolf Creek Gun & Bow
Joe	Tedder	San Juan Outdoor Club
John	Rader	San Juan Citizens Alliance
Jon	Reed	Sportsman Campground
Jordan	Williams	CDT Coalition
Justin	Ramsey	Pagosa Area Water and Sewer District
Justin	Frie	Stone Pass Outfitters/San Juan Back Country Horsemen
Justin & Mary	Adkisson	Crazy Horse Outfitters
Keith	Bruno	Audubon Rockies
Kevin	Daugherty	Dust 2- Mountain Bike Club
Kyle	Rickert	Town of Pagosa Springs
Lance	Thornton	Pagosa Tourism Board
Larry	Smith	PATC-San Juan Back Country Horsemen
Mary Jo	Coulehan	Pagosa Chamber of Commerce
Matt	Huber	CAIC
Mike	Le Roux	Archuleta County Sheriff
Mike	Torres	Archuleta County Pubic Works

Mike	Wight	GOCO
Monica	Nignon	San Juan Headwaters Forest Health Partnership
Nicholas	Olson	National Forest Foundation
Rob	Lambert	Wilderness Trails Data Collection
Rodney	Peart	Wolf Creek Trailblazer Snowmobile Club
Sid	Hott	Pagosa ATV Trail Riders/Snowmobilers
Steve	Hartvigsen	Avid Outdoor Recreationalist
Steve	Earle	San Juan Outdoor Club
Tarrie	Burnett	DUST2
Tobi	Rohwer	Pagosa Outside
Vanessa	Skean	Healthy Archuleta
Walker	Henry	SJNF-Pagosa District
Wes	Lewis	Rancher - Cattle Permittee

APPENDIX 2 – COMMUNITY RECREATION SURVEY RESULTS

PDF of survey results can be found at the following link: [Community Recreation Survey Results All.pdf](#)