

## **NoCo PLACES 2050**

### **People – Land – Access – Conservation – Ecosystems – Sustainability**

#### **Problem Statement**

Colorado's Front Range is growing. From 2010 to 2018, the 7-county metro area added 400,000 new residents, or an average of 50,000 people every year, increasing the total population to 3.2 million. Another 285,000 people are expected to move here by 2025, and by 2050, the area is projected to grow to more than 4.2 million.

Many of these people are doing what Coloradans have enjoyed for generations – heading to the mountains to ski, hike, camp, fish or just drive around to take in the scenery. Colorado's population is growing; our mountains aren't, and therein lies the challenge. Our growing population is straining the capacity of our public lands, negatively impacting our wildlife and natural resources, and putting at risk what makes our state so special – our ability to enjoy our mountains and all they offer.

Managing this growth and its impacts requires a systemic change in the way our public lands are managed. It requires an approach that is:

- Based on core values of stewardship, conservation, sustainability and equity with a focus on ensuring a positive recreational experience.
- Focused on addressing issues and needs that are critical to protecting Colorado's mountains, including watershed health, wildlife management, and ensuring access for all utilizing a thoughtful and deliberate approach.
- Holistic – Federal, state and local governments must work together to identify ways they can cross bureaucratic boundaries to more effectively and efficiently allocate and share resources. Moreover, this issue is not limited to land managers; outdoor recreation interests must also be involved, and ultimately the approach must include transportation, tourism, economic development, and other interests whose decisions have a direct impact on the number of people visiting our public lands.
- Inclusive – The effort to create solutions and the solutions themselves must incorporate and reflect the perspectives and interests of our state's diverse populations, including a diversity of age, race, gender, socio-economics, geography, religion and philosophy.
- Adaptable – We can't predict with certainty what Colorado will look like in the future or how recreational demands may change. We need an approach that is adaptable over the long-term so it can manage this uncertain future.
- Proactive and deliberate – Constrained resources at the federal, state and local levels have resulted in a reactive approach to land management. To protect our mountains, we need a strategy that is proactive and deliberate.
- Financially Sustainable – This approach must identify ways to provide the necessary resources and support, financial and otherwise, that will ensure that the protection and

enhancement of public lands, wildlife, and the Colorado outdoor experience can be durable over the long-term.

The focus of this group will be on the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests but it is hoped that the model and approach that is developed will be replicable to other problem areas in Colorado.