



MEMORANDUM

MEETING TYPE: Board of County Commissioners Meeting

MEETING DATE: October 31, 2023

ITEM NAME: Las Animas County Regional Partnership Letter of Support

SUBMITTED BY: Carl Young

SUMMARY: We received a request from Las Animas County for a letter of support for a regional outdoor recreation partnership.

RECOMMENDATION: Motion to sign the letter of support

BACKGROUND: I was made aware of this project around October 12 and have attached all of the information I have on the project. It does seem to build off of the Southern Mountain Loop and the Highway of Legends generally. If you chose to sign this letter it might be good to mention other Huerfano County stakeholders that we would expect to be involved in this partnership.

BOARD ACTION TAKEN:

APPROVED

DENIED

OTHER

SIGNATURE OF THE CHAIR: _____

NOTES:

John Galusha, Chairman
Arica Andreatta, Commissioner
Karl Sporleder, Commissioner



Board of County Commissioners

Jody Kennedy
Regional Partnership Program Manager
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

October 31, 2023

RE: Las Animas County Regional Partnership Grant Application

Dear Ms. Kennedy,

Huerfano County is proud to support the grant application submitted by Las Animas County to the Regional Partnership Initiative with the intent to form a regional coalition in Las Animas and Huerfano Counties. As you know, support for recreation and conservation interests have grown significantly across southeastern Colorado in recent years, only to be amplified by the establishment of Fishers Peak State Park and additional recreational opportunities across the two counties.

The intent of the Regional Partnership Initiative grant is to create additional capacity for partners to join together in addressing challenges and opportunities created by increased recreation in the region. Our organization supports this grant application because the outcomes will accomplish the following:

- Continue to build relationships amongst and between partners in order to implement on-the-ground projects;
- Identify new partners who are critical, but have been missing from the conversation to-date;
- Assist in identifying regional recreation and conservation project priorities and action steps with buy-in from regional stakeholders;
- Create greater regional understanding of recreation opportunities and how conservation goals can simultaneously be achieved;
- Provide an outline for a path forward to achieve common recreation and conservation goals in the region as well as identify roles and responsibilities;
- Ensure community members across the region are part of the planning and prioritization process; and

- Move the region from planning for economic growth related to recreation to measurable implementation.

Huerfano County is a committed partner in this work and will remain involved in this partnership, should this grant application be funded. Thank you for your consideration of this grant application and your support of our communities in southeastern Colorado.

Sincerely,

John Galusha, Chairman

Arica Andreatta,
Commissioner

Karl Sporleder, Commissioner

Lead Entity Information

Organization: [Las Animas County](#)

Website or Social Media: <https://lasanimascounty.colorado.gov/>

Type of Organization Applying: [County Government](#)

Primary Contact Name: [Phil Dorenkamp](#)

Primary Contact Title: [County Administrator](#)

Primary Contact Email Address: Phil.dorenkamp@lasanimascounty.org

Primary Contact Phone Number: [719-845-2562](#)

Lead Entity Physical Address: [200 East 1st Street](#)

City: [Trinidad](#)

State: [CO](#)

Zip Code: [81082](#)

Mailing Address (if different from physical address): [n/a](#)

Is there a Project Sponsor that is different from the Lead Entity? *This organization assumes the accounting and financial reporting responsibility for funding.* [No](#)

[Skip questions related to project sponsor]

[Upload LAC's W9] Please upload your organization's current W-9 (or your fiscal agent's W9, if using a fiscal agent).

General Coalition Information & RPI Grant Program Criteria

This application will be scored in part based on the criteria provided. Failure to provide a response to any question will reduce your coalition's score. Please read and understand all criteria, and discuss your proposal with CPW staff prior to submitting your application.

Coalition Name (proposed name if convening a new coalition) *Please provide a short, descriptive name that will distinguish your coalition.*

[some ideas below - please indicate your preference with an "x" or add additional ideas]

- [Southern Mountain Loop Outdoor Regional Partnership](#)
- [Highway of Legends Regional Partnership](#)
- [Spanish Peaks Regional Partnership](#)
- [Spanish Peaks Outdoor Coalition \(SPOC\)?](#)

Coalition Webpage URL (optional) [No website at this time, though this will be an aspiration of the group.](#)

Coalition Description

Please write a short summary of your coalition, including the purpose. You may link to websites to support this information. You will have an opportunity later to upload pertinent documents (i.e. coalition charter, guidance documents, etc.).

Convening the [\[partnership name\]](#) is an important next step to further the work already being done in Las Animas County and beyond to support recreation, conservation, and economic development goals in southern Colorado. Strong partnerships began around recreation and conservation in the region as Colorado Parks and Wildlife partnered with the City of Trinidad, Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, and GOCO to purchase and steward Fishers Peak State Park, resulting in a robust [Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan](#). From there, outdoor

recreation and conservation partners continued their partnership during the [Las Animas County Recreation and Economic Impact Study \(Study\)](#). A key result of this study was to formalize a partnership and continue convening broad representatives from across the region working together to improve the economic development of area through recreation and conservation efforts. This coalition, supported by the Regional Partnership Initiative (RPI), will work to convene a representative and robust partnership capable of identifying and implementing regional recreation and conservation interests in line with these existing plans and processes.

Location

Please briefly describe the geographic location and spatial extent of your coalition. *Does it reside within a region of the state (e.g. Northeastern Plains) or encompass certain counties? If you are just forming a coalition, please describe your aspirational boundaries.*

This coalition is in the process of forming. Aspirational boundaries include Las Animas County and Huerfano Counties in Colorado, and may extend beyond that to encompass other southern Colorado communities on the eastern plains.

CPW Region

Southeast

Meeting the 2050 Vision

The Colorado Outdoor Partnership's vision is that in 2050, Colorado's people and economy thrive because of our healthy lands, water, wildlife, working farms, and ranches, accompanied by improved, inclusive outdoor recreation, hunting, and angling opportunities for all.

Representation

To ensure that Regional Partnerships advance the 2050 Vision (listed above) and support a lasting collaborative effort, partner coalitions should represent outdoor recreation users, agriculture/private lands, economic development, wildlife conservation, underrepresented populations, hunting/fishing, local government, CPW, and other land management agencies.

1. List the key outdoor interest areas and sectors you are and/or intend to engage in this coalition. You may include specific organizational names or use general interest categories. Provide an estimated timeline for convening coalition members and forming a standing coalition with a set membership if one does not already exist.
2. *For Regional Partnerships who have received this grant in the past, you may provide links to current work with a description of your collaborative process to date and how you intend to address any gaps in representation.*

The partnership will focus on recreation, conservation, agriculture/private lands as they relate to sustainable economic development of the area. As of now, committed partners include Las Animas County, the City of Trinidad, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Purgatoire Watershed Partnership, Trust for Public Land, and the Nature Conservancy.

The group is also working to secure additional partnerships in the region, including Huerfano County, South Central Council of Governments, City of Walsenburg, San Isabel National Forest, BLM, Trinidad Trails Alliance, La Veta Trails, Trinidad State College, Friends of Fishers Peak and Trinidad Lake State Parks, Friends of Lathrop State Park, and other smaller communities within Las Animas and Huerfano Counties.

Private sector partnerships such as Monument Lake Resort, Panadero Ski Corporation (Cuchara Mountain Park), agricultural interests, and Tarantula Cycles will also be invited to participate.

While many of these partners convened as part of the Process Advisory Committee as part of the Study, momentum would need to be regained and additional partners added to the conversation to truly make this a truly regional approach. If this grant is awarded, the group anticipates standing up a formal coalition within a couple months, complete with a group charter, membership, and roles and responsibilities.

While this group is not a previous Regional Partnerships grant recipient, some of the work under the DOLA-funded Study will feed directly into a broader partnership. This includes initial conversations around membership and community engagement, early action projects, and data and information on the current recreation and conservation landscape in southeast Colorado. The group will use this information as a basis for standing up the partnership and addressing gaps in representation.

Proposal Description

Please write a brief summary of your proposal for funding.

1. How will this coalition advance the statewide Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative and progress toward the 2050 Vision?
2. Please describe how this Initiative will strengthen your coalition and/or regional efforts to advance conservation AND outdoor recreation planning. What benefit does this funding opportunity provide to your community and partners?

At present, there is a gap of representation in the Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative for the eastern plains. Much of this is due to the make-up of land ownership in eastern Colorado, specifically in southeast Colorado where most of the land is privately owned. As the economic make-up of Trinidad, Huerfano, Las Animas, and the surrounding southeast Colorado communities shifts from mining and marijuana focuses, there's an opportunity to utilize recreation and conservation interests to bolster economic development while also providing community members with greater access to public lands that may not have existed before. This coalition will bring together interests from across the region to identify and implement outdoor recreation and conservation goals for this region towards a stronger, more resilient community.

The request for this proposal is \$100,000 to fund the initial convening and visioning of the group. Over a 12-month period, it is anticipated that the group will meet 8-10 times to develop a regional vision, identify gaps in participation, gather new partners, and strategize on-the-ground actions to build momentum and see the vision through. The group will review previous data and analyses from various regional studies, make recommendations on next steps, and work to identify funding opportunities towards implementation. The final deliverable includes a partnership structure and charter, partner roles and responsibilities, confirmation of geographic area served, and identification of early projects and next steps towards a region-wide strategic plan.

The Initiative can provide crucial funding to allow stakeholders to hire a facilitator as well as technical experts who know and understand the region to guide partners through the process. Given that the focus on outdoor recreation and conservation is largely new for these communities, support is needed to help partners understand what questions they should be asking, what has worked well in other similar regions across Colorado, and how to best work together to achieve common recreation and conservation goals.

This funding will also stimulate the momentum towards action that is already growing in Las Animas and Huerfano Counties - including growing interest around Fishers Peak State Park, desire to connect trail systems along the Highway 12 Southern Mountain Loop, and the opening of a local ski area in the region.

Proposal Primary Purpose

For what purpose are you applying to the Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative? (select one from the following)

For Partnership Capacity grants, applicants may request between \$25,000 and \$150,000 to support coalition building, facilitation, communication, administration, and coordination.

For Plan Development Grants, CPW will consider requests between \$50,000 and \$250,000 to support capacity and plan development work including public involvement, communications, research, geospatial analysis, and assessments of current conditions.

Partnership Capacity Grant

Wildlife & Natural Resources:

Please describe how this coalition will work with its stakeholders to establish high-priority land, water, and wildlife conservation needs and then collaborate to develop a region wide vision, objectives and strategies to inform a regional plan. For Regional Partnerships who have received this grant in the past, please provide links to current work and describe what has changed or evolved.

1. List information sources, tools, and/or the methodology you intend to use to inform this work.
2. Provide an estimated timeline for completing this plan (the timeline can exceed the duration of this grant application period).

The goal of the partnership is to bring together a diverse range of interests who simultaneously bring respective expertise and information to the discussion. For example, including the Purgatoire Watershed Partnership is a strategic goal in order to better understand watershed challenges and interests of agricultural users as it relates to the natural resources of the region. The partnership will also work with the Nature Conservancy, who are connected to private landowners and host their own database to support decision-making as it relates to conservation goals. Additional partners and resources might include the State Land Board, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Department of Local Affairs, and the Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office.

This process can also integrate with CPW and other partners to ensure that future recreation and land use priorities are compatible with wildlife habitat and natural resources in the region. These include substantial populations of elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep and mule deer, vast expanses of native shortgrass prairie, and significant biological diversity and rare plant communities along the peaks and mesas. This habitat assessment work was initiated with the Las Animas County Study, and can be tailored to the region once its boundaries and priorities are determined.

Developing a plan for establishing land, water, and conservation needs will likely take more than a year beyond the scope of this grant. While the partners will begin discussing these opportunities and challenges within this grant period, the ultimate goal in the first 12 months is to build a robust partnership that relies on trust and collaboration in order to make technical deliverables easier to develop in the

future. Once the partnership boundary, participation, structure, and focus is determined, the momentum will be in place to engage in a strategic planning process.

Sustainable Outdoor Recreation

Please describe how this coalition will establish high-priority outdoor recreation needs for maintaining and improving equitable access and quality outdoor recreation experiences and then collaborate to develop a region wide vision, objectives and strategies to inform a regional plan. Please explain how the coalition will consider recreation objectives in conjunction with wildlife/natural resource objectives. For Regional Partnerships who have received this grant in the past, you can provide links to current work and describe what has changed or evolved.

1. Please list information sources, tools, and/or methodology you intend to use to inform this work (CODEX, COMap, Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind, etc.).
2. Please provide an estimated timeline for completing this plan (the timeline can exceed the duration of this grant application period).

While recreation will be a large driver of economic growth in the region, stakeholders and partners acknowledge that conservation interests are just as important to understand and include in the planning effort. Partners will utilize recent plans including the Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan, LAC Recreation and Economic Impact Study, Highway 12 PEL, and other relevant regional resources to understand both the recreation opportunities and the conservation needs in the area. Tools like CODEX will be useful for the partners to see which trails and outdoor spaces are currently mapped, and provide information if there are changes or additions the group would like to see in the region moving forward.

Similar to a plan for conservation goals, developing a recreation plan for the region will likely take more than a year beyond the scope of the grant. The partners plan to begin identifying early priorities during this 12-month grant cycle, but a more robust plan will be developed once the partnership is fully formed and established.

Community Outreach and Involvement

Please describe how this project will involve the public and capture community input to inform the development of conservation and sustainable recreation priorities. For Regional Partnerships who have received this grant in the past, you may provide links to current work and describe what has changed or evolved.

1. Summarize your approach to informing key interest groups and the public with specific consideration for engaging communities traditionally underrepresented in outdoor recreation and conservation.

Through the Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan and the LAC Recreation and Economic Impact Study, the partners have a robust list of community members interested in conservation and recreation priorities in the region. While not all of these community members may be on the partnership committee, the partners will work together to ensure input from these groups and individuals is part of the visioning. The partners will first start by understanding priorities from the Master Plan and Study, and then seek to gather additional community feedback through events and opportunities that target underrepresented groups in the region including the agricultural community, small towns and businesses, spanish-speaking populations, indigenous communities, and youth and families. The partners will utilize community events, traditional and non-traditional media sources that are known across the region (radio, newspaper, facebook), and community leaders to ensure the group is well connected to what local stakeholders wish to see.

In addition to focusing on existing local community members, the region is growing and experiencing more tourism than ever before. Some outreach will also be conducted to visitors and tourists to better understand what they would like to see in the region with the ultimate goal of supporting sustainable economic development, habitat conservation, and outdoor recreation.

Statewide Plan Key Elements

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Colorado Governor's Office are developing Colorado's Outdoors Strategy, *A collaborative vision for conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable recreation*. CPW and the CO-OP have proposed Plan Key Elements to help inform Colorado's Outdoors Strategy. The intent is to use these elements as a high-level template to capture local and regional values, needs, and priorities under a shared strategy and vision.

Does your coalition agree to produce the following key planning elements outlined below?

I. Vision: Identify the vision for an established area or region. How does this vision support the State-level Vision? Does it complement [Colorado's Outdoor Principles](#)? Does the vision reflect a desired future condition for a defined area?

II. Goals & Measurable Objectives: What are the desired outcomes or goals of this collaborative effort, and how will they help achieve the regional and state-level visions? How will you measure success or progress in reaching these goals and what is the timeline?

III. Conservation Goals & Needs: What are the conservation-specific goals? What is the current situation or existing condition with private and public lands? What are the trends, threats and opportunities to achieving desired future conditions? How do these needs address equity, diversity, and inclusion? Have you captured community voices in identifying these goals?

IV. Outdoor Recreation Goals & Needs: What are the outdoor recreation-specific goals? What is the current or existing condition of outdoor recreation opportunities and infrastructure? What are the trends, threats and opportunities to achieving desired future conditions? How do these needs address equity, diversity, and inclusion? Have you captured community voices in identifying these goals?

V. Priority Actions & Projects: What are the strategies for advancing and balancing conservation and outdoor recreation goals? Can you identify geographic locations for conservation and recreation projects? What are the top priority actions and projects when considering the challenges and opportunities?

VI. Implementation & Monitoring: What are the strategies for advancing priority actions and projects? What are the funding needs to support this work? How will you measure and monitor progress over time? How will you gain community support for the local/regional planning elements?

[Please Sign on the Line Below]

Applicant Supporting Information

CAPACITY GRANT - Regional Partnerships Funding Request

Regional Partnerships Capacity Funding requests should be between \$25,000 and \$150,000. Please provide the total dollar amount of your request. You can only choose one grant category for funding.

[\\$100,000](#)

PLAN DEVELOPMENT GRANT - Regional Partnerships Funding Request

Regional Partnerships Plan Development and Research Funding requests should be between \$25,000 and \$250,000 for one to two years. Please provide the total dollar amount for your request. You can only choose one grant category for funding.

N/A

What is the duration of your project?

Maximum duration is two years (24 months). Provide your answer in months.

12 Months

[Timeline Upload] [RPI Grant Timeline Form Las Animas.xlsx](#)

[Proposed Budget Upload] [RPI Grant Budget Form Las Animas.xlsx](#)

[Letters of Recommendation (Required)]

- City of Trinidad (Jared/Steve)
- PWP (Julie)
- CPW (Crystal)
- TPL (Chandi/Jake)

[Maps (Optional)]

[Other Pertinent Documents (Optional)]

- FPSP Master Plan
- Las Animas County Study
- Las Animas County Recommendations on Collaboration (BOCC Slides)
- Highway 12 PEL
- La Veta Trails Master Plan

By checking the boxes below, I certify that the information contained in this grant application is accurate and that my organization agrees to the following:

[\[Check Boxes\]](#)

Applicant Signature

By signing this application, you agree to have your coalition considered to join the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership Initiative, to advancing a state-level vision and supporting the development of a statewide plan that captures the key planning elements.

[Signature]

Las Animas County
200 E. 1st Str Room 110
Trinidad, CO. 81082



Felix M. Lopez, Commissioner
Tony C. Hass, Commissioner
Luis A. Lopez II, Commissioner

October 10, 2023

Jody Kennedy
Regional Partnership Program Manager
Colorado Parks and Wildlife
6060 Broadway
Denver, CO 80216

Dear Ms. Kennedy,

Las Animas County, on behalf of our regional and community partners, is submitting this letter of interest to apply for a Partnership Capacity grant under Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative. Over the last year, our community has completed a county-wide Outdoor Recreation and Economic Impact Study to create a long-term balanced vision for sustainable outdoor recreation and community development. This process engaged many key stakeholders and community members, and has demonstrated the value and the need for long-term collaborative engagement as a region.

Our intent is to seek a Partnership Capacity grant to allow us to: a) re-convene our recent community stakeholder discussions, b) engage with regional partners outside of the county, including neighboring Huerfano County, and c) develop a community-driven process to identify and implement projects and strategies that balance meaningful wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, equitable access, and the preservation of our cultural and agricultural heritage.

To initiate this process, we are currently working with a number of valued partners, including the City of Trinidad, Purgatoire Watershed Partnership, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Trinidad State College, and the Trust for Public Land. We look forward to submitting a full application on November 1, that will outline our initial approach to convening a regional partnership for southern Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Phil Dorenkamp".

Phil Dorenkamp

Las Animas County Administrator