

# State Trails Program



## TRAIL USE IN COLORADO

### Importance of Trail Recreation in Colorado

Trails are a valuable resource for promoting health, fitness, and a connection with nature. Additionally, trails are how many residents and visitors connect to Colorado's nature and wildlife. Continuing to improve trail recreation opportunities while protecting wildlife, habitat, and cultural resources, as well as other environmental aspects, is at the heart of CPW's mission.

Trail related recreation, including non-motorized and motorized recreation, continues to be the most popular type of recreation in Colorado. Studies about participation in outdoor recreation indicates that 83% of Coloradans recreate on trails, and that total participation exceeded 227 million activity days in 2013. These figures are consistent with previous studies, indicating the long-term popularity of trail related recreation in Colorado.

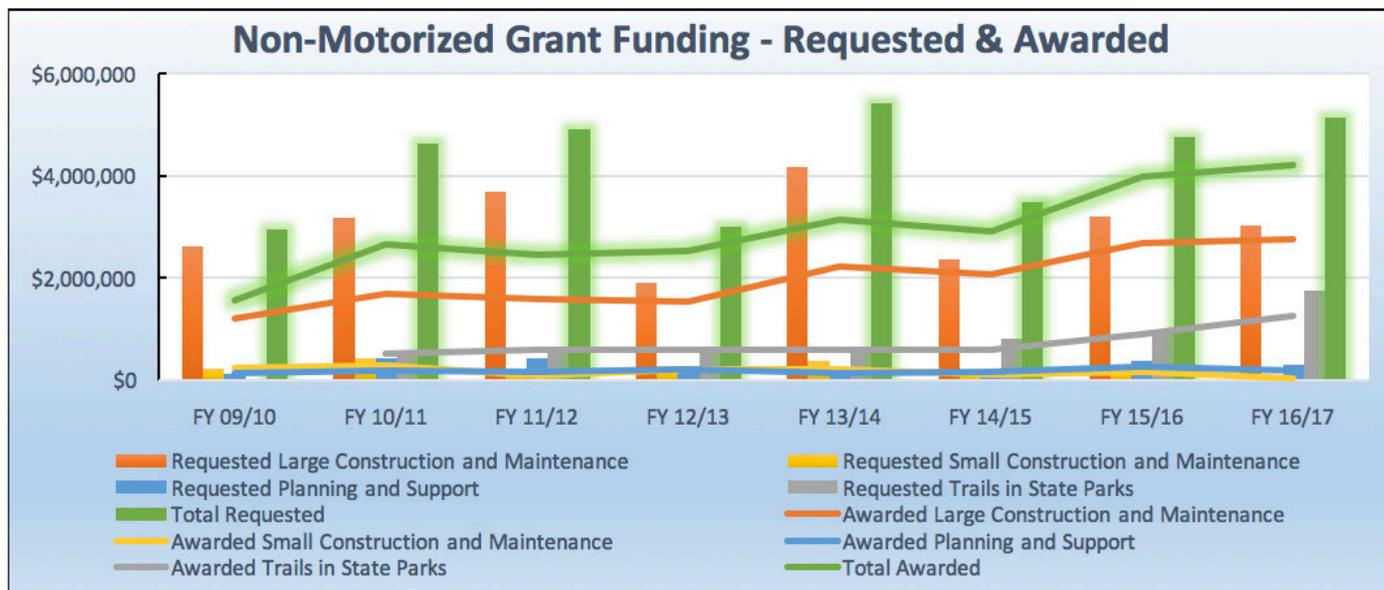
Current estimates are that there are over 39 thousand miles of trails in Colorado. Of that total, approximately 84 percent (29,503 miles) are on federal lands, principally those managed by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Local and Regional governments provide about 12 percent of the total (4,205 miles). Approximately 2.5 percent (867 miles) are managed by CPW and other state agencies while the remaining 1.5 percent (485 miles) are managed by NGO's.

Outdoor recreation is fundamentally important to Colorado, including Colorado's outstanding quality of life and vital economic contributions to the state. A recent, non-scientific, poll conducted for CPW indicated that Colorado resident respondents stated that trail recreation is very important to their quality of life. Previous research, found that outdoor recreation in Colorado generates:

- \$34.5 billion annually (2013) in direct and indirect economic impacts and \$21 billion on trips and equipment;
- 313,000 jobs and \$4.2 billion in wages and salaries, and;
- \$4.9 billion in local, state, and federal tax revenues.

### Colorado's State Trails Program

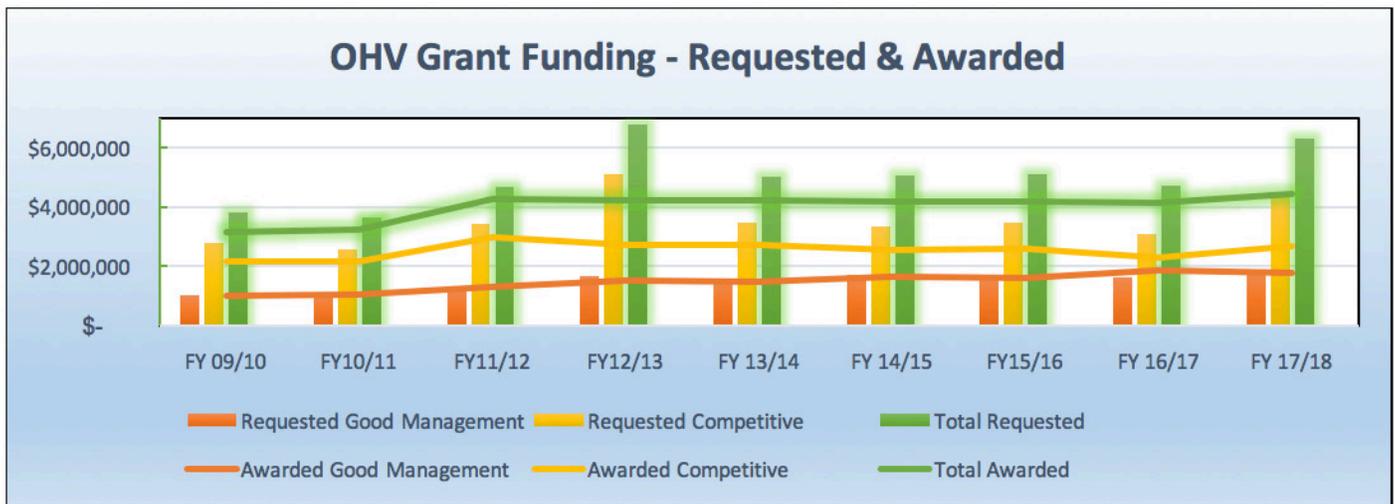
The **Recreational (non-motorized) Trails Program** assists local governments, clubs, nonprofit partners and federal land managers through grants and expertise for non-motorized trails in Colorado. Every year the program awards \$2 to \$3 million in non-motorized trails grants depicted in the chart below that shows CPW's annual total non-motorized grant requests and awards (green column/line)



and the grant types (other columns/lines) since 2010. Unfortunately each year, the difference between funding requests and available grant funds grows annually. The erratic nature of federal funds seriously hinder CPW's ability to meet Colorado's growing trails needs. Fortunately, the reliability of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) funding provides some consistency for non-motorized trail grants. These funds are especially important for clubs, nonprofits and other trail supporters to continue their trails based work. Looking at the ever increasing demand for trail recreation, the need to create a stable, dedicated funding stream for non-motorized trails is crucial.

The **Colorado OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Program** funding comes principally from annual OHV registrations and use permits. In 2016, the Program issued over 180,000 OHV registrations and use permits. This enabled the OHV Program to award over \$4 million in OHV grants for on-the-ground trail improvements, trail maintenance, rider education and compliance programs. Motorized trail recreation, which typically involves travel to a location that allows motorized trail use as well as use of specialized off highway equipment, generates about \$2.3 billion annually in Colorado.

Colorado has developed a unique and groundbreaking OHV trail maintenance approach known as the "Good Management Program." Trail crews that successfully fulfill their annual OHV trail grant work become eligible for "Good Management Program" status. Designation as a Good Management Program ensures steady annual funding. This strengthens the crew sponsor's ability to hire experienced, seasonal workers. The result is more efficient funding for the maintenance and management of the busiest OHV riding areas in Colorado.



The chart above details OHV grant funding requests and the allocations to the Good Management Program and other competitive OHV grants. Revenue from OHV registrations continues to increase. Annual requests for OHV grants always exceed the available funding.

The OHV program initiated a Law Enforcement and Field Presence Program with the US Forest Service and BLM in 2011 to document rider compliance with OHV regulations. Data and results have shown that 95 % of riders in Colorado comply with OHV rules in OHV riding areas across Colorado. Results also documented little environmental damage from OHV use in sensitive areas. Trail maintenance, education, and signage are identified as top priorities for further action.

**The Snowmobile Program** provides funding for trail grooming, trail improvements, the Snowmobile Safety Certification Program as well as enforcement and signing. Program funding comes from registrations and out-of-state use permits. Grants totaled over \$900,000 in 2016, with grants going to 28 snowmobile clubs affiliated with the Colorado Snowmobile Association. Through this program clubs groom approximately 3,300 miles of snowmobile trails for the use and benefit of all winter sports enthusiasts. These groomed trails provide critical access to first responders for emergency back country evacuations and rescues.

**Summary**

Since 2000, CPW's Trails Program distributed over \$102 million for trail grants and capital improvements that benefit year round trail use inclusive of winter trail grooming operations. These funds have created job opportunities especially through the Youth Corp organizations, which received about \$1.6 million to build and maintain trails. Colorado is currently seeing an exponential growth in population and many of the people moving here are doing so for the great recreation opportunities the state offers. Interest in trails access and use continues to increase, representing a significant obligation to CPW's Trails Program. Unfortunately each year, the difference between funding requests and available grant funds grows annually. Looking at the ever increasing demand for trail recreation, the need to create a stable, dedicated funding stream for non-motorized trails is crucial.