

Dear Executive Director Gibbs, Director Davis, and Commissioners,

First, thank you all for your time and commitment to managing wildlife in Colorado. Also, a warm welcome to our newest Commissioners.

The Colorado Wildlife Conservation Project (CWCP) is an alliance of diverse wildlife organizations with a common interest in conserving and sustaining wildlife and wildlife habitats and preserving our hunting, angling, and conservation heritage. We are steadfast in our efforts to continue the state's long history of responsible, science-based wildlife management. CWCP comprises organizations representing tens of thousands of outdoor enthusiasts across the state and country. Hunting, fishing, and watchable wildlife contribute \$5 billion in economic output in Colorado each year and support over 40,000 jobs across the state. Hunting, trapping, and fishing strengthen people's connections to nature, improve individuals' physical and mental health, foster lasting bonds between family members and friends, and are an essential part of our culture. Colorado's population continues to grow, and humanity continues to utilize public lands for outdoor recreation at an incredibly high rate. As our population grows, our uses and need for space often conflict with wildlife's needs.

Through many years of scientific data and our own experiences, we are intimately aware of the complexity behind balancing the biological management needs of 961 species with the Social and Economic needs and wants of humans. We write to counter the movement that requests that all Over the Counter (OTC) licenses be reserved for Resident hunters alone. We believe hunters are all equal, regardless of their means of take, season, or residency. Hunting is conservation and is the primary management tool for game populations. Additionally, the hunting licenses sold are the majority funding source for the agency. 68% of agency big game wildlife funds come from nonresident elk hunters. If OTC licenses were no longer biologically appropriate, a change from OTC would be a management request from one or more of the state's 200+ biologists. In that instance, we would, of course, support any science-based wildlife conservation decision.

Recently, the commission approved a historic pull of available licenses due to the horrific Winter kill in the northwest portion of the state. We applaud this move as the best direction for future population recovery. A motion was made at the same meeting to change allocations to a more favorable percentage allocation for resident hunters. This motion was passed without a complete economic study, as the staff recommendation and fiscal analysis were not adopted. According to the agency report, resident hunters are on the decline. Nonresident hunters remain steady, possibly due to curtailments based on differing game populations and residency requirements in other Western states.

Title 33-9-101 statutorily dictates that the Commission *“(b)(II) Regardless of the particular interests or qualifications possessed by each member appointed to the commission pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subsection (3), each commissioner represents diverse parks, wildlife, and outdoor recreation throughout Colorado and is committed to the long-term financial stability and sustainability of the department.”* It is your statutory responsibility to plan long-term. While most understand there is a surplus of funds now. It is a percentage of the

annual need that aligns with typical emergency funds in business and household economics. Utilization will theoretically buffer the revenue losses from the NW as those populations recover, keep personnel employed, and programs running for the 880+ species, not generating self-funding licenses or replacement funding. Adept scientific management requires solid, consistent funding.

All Hunters, trappers, and anglers have historically and voluntarily provided this for over a century in Colorado, even with a relatively low statewide 15% success rate. While some supporters of allocation changes have noted the possibility of a Resident license price increase, all license fee increases are a legislative process in Colorado. The last incremental increase was with the Future Generations Act. It raised the Resident Elk license to \$8.75 and linked the cost to the CPI. It also took two years to get passed in the Legislature. With winter kill, predator loads, habitat loss, migratory disconnection, exploding recreational usage, and general human population growth, the game we rely on is struggling. These challenged species are relied upon to fund our wildlife agency. It is always important to look long-term and plan accordingly.

Collectively, our organizations understand that funding is not scientific, but funding is the cornerstone of successful conservation practices. We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our desire to see a complete study of Licensing, loss of any hunters (Resident hunters especially), statistical analysis/forecasting of the Draw, and the financial repercussions of any changes to such that are not species need-based. As part of the commission's statutory responsibility, studies and analyses should be complete before any changes or decisions regarding the current procedures.

Sincerely,

Colorado Wildlife Conservation Project members:

[Colorado Outfitters Association](#)

Documentation:

[Colorado Revised Statutes Title 33-101.](#)

[Terrestrial Study of Licenses 01-21](#)

[Draw Recaps](#)

[Economic Data - Hunting Works for Colorado](#)

[OTC and Draw summary tally](#)