

Property Transaction Proposal Cover Sheet

Natural Resources -- Parks and Wildlife *La Jara Reservoir SWA - State Land Board - Fee Title Acquisition*

Conejos County

2,427 acres

23 miles southwest of Monte Vista

Action Required

Recommend support for the fee title acquisition of 2,427 acres surrounding the La Jara State Wildlife Area from the State Land Board (\$6,067,500 for 2,427 acres).

Questions and Responses

None.



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 2026 – PROPERTY TRANSACTION PROPOSAL
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Parks and Wildlife

Action Requested

Pursuant to C.R.S. 33-1-105(3)(a) and C.R.S. 33-10-107(2) recommend support to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for the Division of Parks and Wildlife's proposal to purchase fee title to 2,427 acres from the State Land Board.

General Information

Project Name	La Jara Reservoir State Wildlife Area (SWA) - State Land Board - Fee Title Acquisition Real Estate Project 24-027
Location	Fee Title Acquisition (2,427 acres, Conejos County) 23 miles southwest of Monte Vista

Costs / Source of Funding

Consideration	Appraised Value: \$6,067,500.00 Total Consideration: \$6,067,500.00 \$1,217,500.00 Third Party Partner Funds -Great Outdoors Colorado \$567,500 -National Fish and Wildlife Foundation \$500,000 -Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust \$150,000 \$4,850,000.00 CPW Funds
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CPW Funding*	Habitat Stamp <i>Habitat Stamp revenues, which are earmarked for the benefit of wildlife habitat or access to wildlife habitat, pursuant to C.R.S. §33-4-102.7.</i>
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Spending authority has already been approved for this project in the Long Bill.

Fiscal Year: FY 2026-27

Line Item: 2025 Property Acquisitions
And Improvements

Appropriation: \$24,973,211.60

Remaining Unexpended Balance: \$24,964,922.08

Development Costs	\$236,700 (11 cattle guards, 2 culverts, 1 vault toilet, 6 new signs, 7 miles of new barbed wire fencing, weed control materials)
Annual Operation Costs	\$21,200 (fuel, materials, equipment, weed control, Impact Assistance Grants to Conejos County); however, this acquisition will result in CPW retiring its State Trust Lands lease over the La Jara State Trust Lands, which costs approximately \$109,000/year. Yielding a net annual savings of \$87,800.

** The Division may alter the source of funds for individual acquisitions based on circumstances that arise in the time period prior to closing.*

Summary of Proposal

To purchase 2,427 acres in fee title surrounding the existing La Jara Reservoir SWA. CPW would be responsible for \$4,850,000 of the purchase cost and the remaining \$1,217,500 would be matched with funding from Great Outdoors Colorado, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust.

CPW currently owns and manages 700 acres in and around La Jara Reservoir as part of La Jara Reservoir SWA. With this acquisition, La Jara Reservoir SWA would more than quadruple in size to 3,127 acres, and include the entire reservoir, the entire shoreline and a good amount of the surrounding uplands, giving CPW direct management control of the reservoir and the surrounding basin.

CPW has owned the existing 700 acres of La Jara Reservoir SWA since 1960, but the 2,427 acres that CPW desires to acquire now have been owned by the Colorado State Land Board since 1881. CPW has leased these lands for multiple decades through the State Trust Lands Hunting and Fishing Access Program. Under this program, the public has access to the Property for fishing, hunting, camping, and wildlife viewing. This Property has outsized importance to the underserved community of Conejos County, whose residents have utilized it for many generations.

The State Land Board has now moved to sell its interest in the La Jara State Trust Lands made up of approximately 46,000 acres, including the 2,427 acres that CPW desires to purchase, and over 43,000 acres intended for sale to the federal government through the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The La Jara State Trust Lands are a part of the contiguous public land mosaic that is made up of USFS, BLM, and CPW lands that provide important habitat for big game, particularly elk and pronghorn. Moose, bighorn sheep, mule deer, and black bear also utilize the property, as

well as dabbling ducks, lesser scaup, bald eagle, sandhill crane, short-eared owl, peregrine falcon, American white pelican, northern goshawk, northern harrier, swainson's hawk, American marten, boreal owl, and northern leopard frog. The La Jara State Trust Lands provide important habitat for the Rio Grande Cutthroat, a state Species of Special Concern and a Tier 1 Species in the State Wildlife Action Plan. The La Jara Reservoir portion of the State Trust Lands is the center and arguably most critical part for wildlife conservation. The Property includes 2.7 miles of streams, including La Jara Creek, Jim Creek, and Torsido Creek, all of which are known to support Rio Grande Cutthroat. Direct control of the reservoir and the surrounding shoreline would allow CPW to best manage the reservoir, the wetlands, and uplands for wildlife habitat, as well as preserve the connectivity to other public lands in the South San Juan Mountains.

CPW intends to incorporate and manage the Property as part of La Jara Reservoir SWA, preserving and enhancing the wildlife habitat, and continuing public access for fishing and hunting, along with providing public hunting and fishing access to adjacent BLM and USFS lands. CPW intends to continue seasonal grazing on the Property in a manner that will improve and maintain grass conditions, improve wetland habitat, with appropriate animal units per month (AUMs) based on the size of the Property.

Mineral Interest Ownership

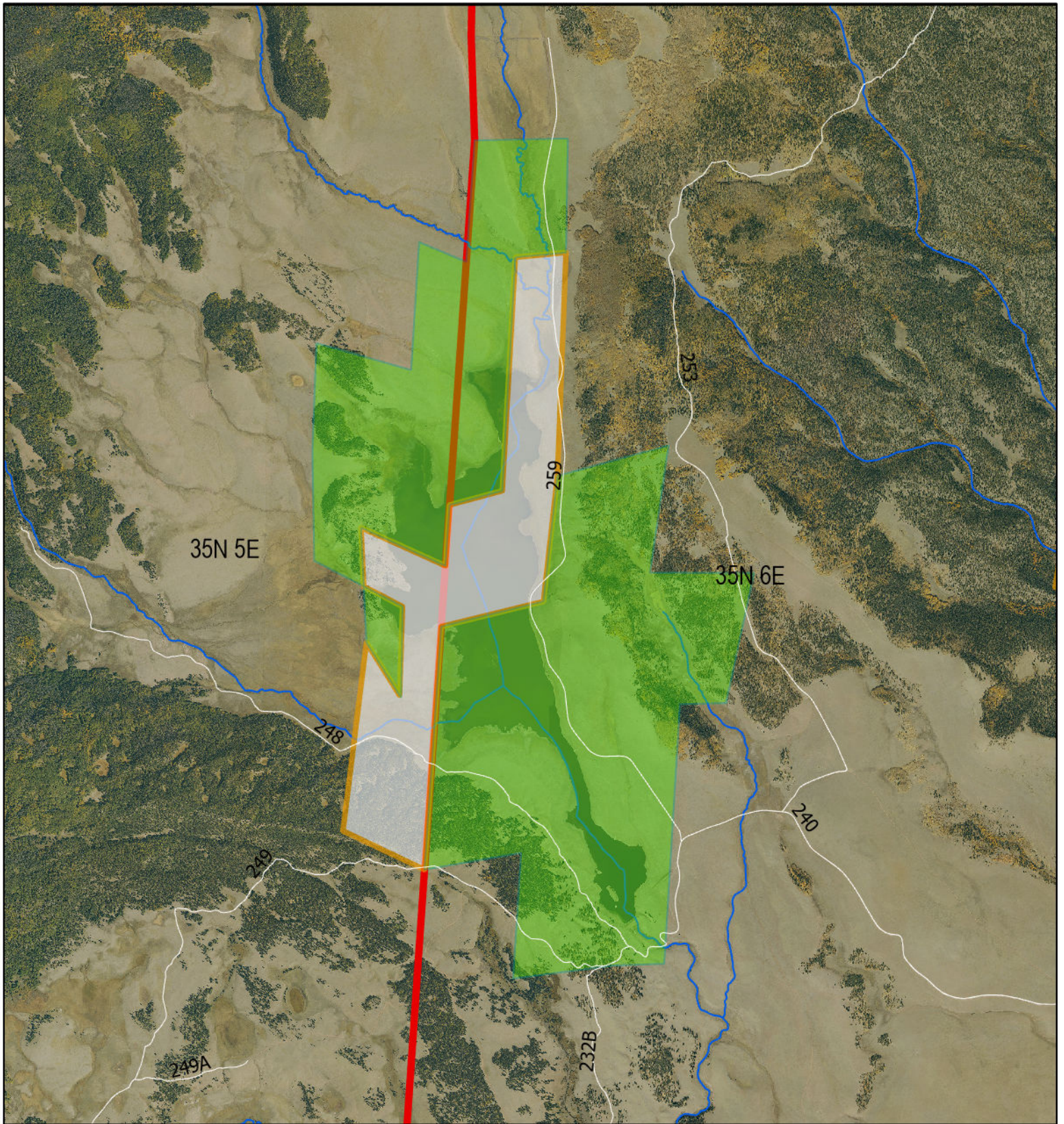
The State Land Board will retain all mineral rights on the property as it is required to do by law. A mineral assessment determined that the "likelihood of mineral development in the area is considered low."

Water Rights

No water rights will be conveyed as part of this transaction. CPW is already a 100% owner of the water in La Jara Reservoir.

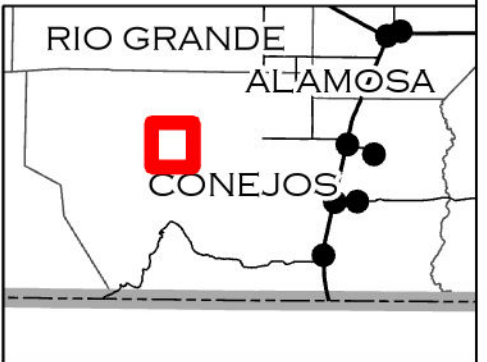
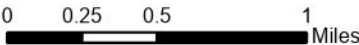
Attachments

- Map
- Photos
- Concurrence Letters



La Jara Reservoir SWA
State Land Board - Fee Title 24-027
Conejos County

-  RFP Acquisition
-  La Jara Reservoir SWA



La Jara Reservoir SWA



The La Jara Reservoir SWA Welcome Sign.



La Jara Reservoir and the surrounding lands, much of which will be added to the SWA, more than quadrupling its size.

La Jara Reservoir SWA



La Jara Creek provides habitat for Rio Grande Cutthroat.



Upland prairie and woodlands that provide habitat to big game and other wildlife.



Board of County Commissioners

Mitchell Jarvies

Joseph J. Baroz

Delfino Garcia

July 7, 2026

Monte Vista Office
0722 S. CR 1E • Monte Vista, CO 81144
PH: (719) 587.6900

RE: La Jara Reservoir State Wildlife Area-Fee Title-State Land Board Project - 24-027

To Whom It May Concern,

We, the Conejos County Board of Commissioners, would like to support the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) fee title acquisition. The subject property is 2,160 acres of grassland basin with forested ridges, an open water reservoir, rock outcroppings, wet meadows, and approximately 1.5 miles of streams. Its stretches of La Jara Creek, Jim Creek, and Torsido Creek contain core populations of native Rio Grande cutthroat trout. The area is important habitat for big game, in particular elk and pronghorn, which both concentrate on and migrate through the property. Because of CPW's long-standing access agreement with the State Land Board, the local community relies on the property for wildlife-based recreation, especially fishing and hunting. Much of this public use is multi-generational and carries cultural importance in Conejos County.

Purchase of the 2,160 acres surrounding La Jara Reservoir will protect important big game habitat, help CPW better manage streams with vulnerable conservation populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout, and improve CPW's boundaries at the existing La Jara Reservoir State Wildlife Area. The project will also allow the Rio Grande National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management to move forward with additional conservation acquisitions of 43,525 acres surrounding this project. Establishing public ownership of almost the entire La Jara basin is a true landscape-scale conservation project with profound community and ecological importance in one of Colorado's most underserved regions.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is committed to being a good neighbor in the communities where they own land in fee title for the benefit of wildlife and sportspeople. Each county in which they own land is eligible to receive an Impact Assistance Grant (IAG), which is based on the agricultural tax rate. In January of each year, they send a notice to all county assessors in which Colorado Parks and Wildlife owns fee title land, advising them that they are eligible for impact assistance from us. This year, CPW paid \$3,985.87 to Conejos County through this program.

Sincerely,
The Conejos County Board of Commissioners



Mitchell Jarvies
Chairman



Joseph Baroz
Vice Chairman



Delfino Garcia
Vice Charman