Natural Resources

FY 2026-27 Joint Budget Committee Hearing Agenda

Thursday, January 8, 2025

9:00 am – 11:00 am

9:00 – 9:05 Introductions and Opening Comments

Presenter: Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director

9:05 – 9:20 Severance Tax

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Carly Jacobs, DNR Chief Financial Officer

Supporting Presenters:

- Aaron Ray, DNR Director of Policy
- Nate Pearson, DNR Assistant Director for Water Policy
- Laura Clellan, Acting Director Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Topics:

- Revenue: Pages 1-3, Questions 1-2 in the packet,
- Severance Tax Operational Fund: Pages 3-10, Questions 3-8 in the packet

9:20 – 9:30 Energy and Carbon Management Commission

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Carly Jacobs, DNR Chief Financial Officer
- Julie Murphy, Director Energy and Carbon Management Commission

Supporting Presenters:

- Matthew Blackmon, Budget Director Energy and Carbon Management Commission

Topics:

- Conservation Levy and Fee Reserve: Pages 10-11, Questions 9-11, in the packet
- Orphaned Wells Mitigation Enterprise: Pages 11-12, Questions 12 in the packet

9:30 – 10:00 State Land Board

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Nicole Rosmarino, Director State Land Board
- Nick Massie, Deputy Director, CFO State Land Board

Topics:

- Strategic Plan: Pages 12-13, Question 13 in the packet
- Appropriations: Pages 13-15, Questions 14-17 in the packet
- Revenue: Pages 15-21, Questions 18-23 in the packet

10:00 – 10:25 Parks and Wildlife

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Laura Clellan, Acting Director Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Tim Mauck, Deputy Director Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Supporting Presenters:

- Justin Rutter, CFO Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Reid DeWalt, Deputy Director Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Topics:

- Parks and Wildlife Operations: Pages 21-23, Questions 24-28 in the packet
- Wolves: Pages 24-28, Questions 29-36 in the packet

10:25 – 10:35 Colorado Water Conservation Board

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Lauren Ris, Director Colorado Water Conservation Board

Supporting Presenters:

- Anna Mauss, Deputy Colorado Water Conservation Board

Topics:

- R2 CWCB Water Plan Grant Program: Pages 28-32, Questions 37-41 in the packet

10:35 – 10:55 Wildfire Mitigation

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director
- Matt McCombs, State Forester and Director Colorado State Forest Service

Supporting Presenters:

- Alison Lerch, Assistant Director Forest Health and Wildfire Mitigation
- Christina Burri, Deputy State Forester
- Kristin Garrison, Assoc. Director, Forest Planning and Implementation
- Justin Rutter, CFO Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Laura Clellan, Acting Director Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Topics:

- Big Picture: Pages 33-35, Questions 42-43 in the packet
- Program Detail: Page 35-36, Questions 44-47 in the packet

10:55 – 11:00 Cash Fund Detail

Main Presenters:

- Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director

Supporting Presenters:

- Carly Jacobs, DNR Chief Financial Officer
- Matt McCombs,State Forester and Director Colorado State Forest Service

Topics:

- Continuously Appropriated Funds: Pages 37-38, Question 48 in the packet

Department of Natural Resources FY 2026-27 Budget Hearing

Joint Budget Committee
January 8, 2026

COLORADO
Department of Natural Resources

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Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Overview of DNR
3. Mission, Divisions, Appropriations, Request

DNR Mission & Vision

The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is:

To manage and conserve Colorado's natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of people today and tomorrow.

DNR's vision:

Colorado will be a national leader in promoting the responsible use and conservation of natural resources for this and future generations.

DNR Organizational Chart

Department of Natural Resources
Dan Gibbs, Executive Director

Executive Director's Office*
85.9 FTE

Reclamation, Mining, & Safety
Michael Cunningham, Director
64.8 FTE

Energy and Carbon Management Commission
Julie Murphy, Director
204.5 FTE

State Land Board
Nicole Rosmarino, Director
51.5 FTE

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Laura Clellan, Acting Director
1068.7 FTE

CO Water Conservation Board
Lauren Ris, Director
63.5 FTE

Division of Water Resources
Jason Ullmann, Director and State Engineer
268.5 FTE

**Includes CO Avalanche Information Center, COSWAP, Colorado River Program, and Produced Water Consortium*
*** Colorado State Forest Service FTE are housed within CSU*

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FY 2025-26 Operating Appropriations by Division

Total Funds = $530.7M

General Fund = $57.1M

Cash Funds = $421.4M*

Reapprop Funds = $9.6M

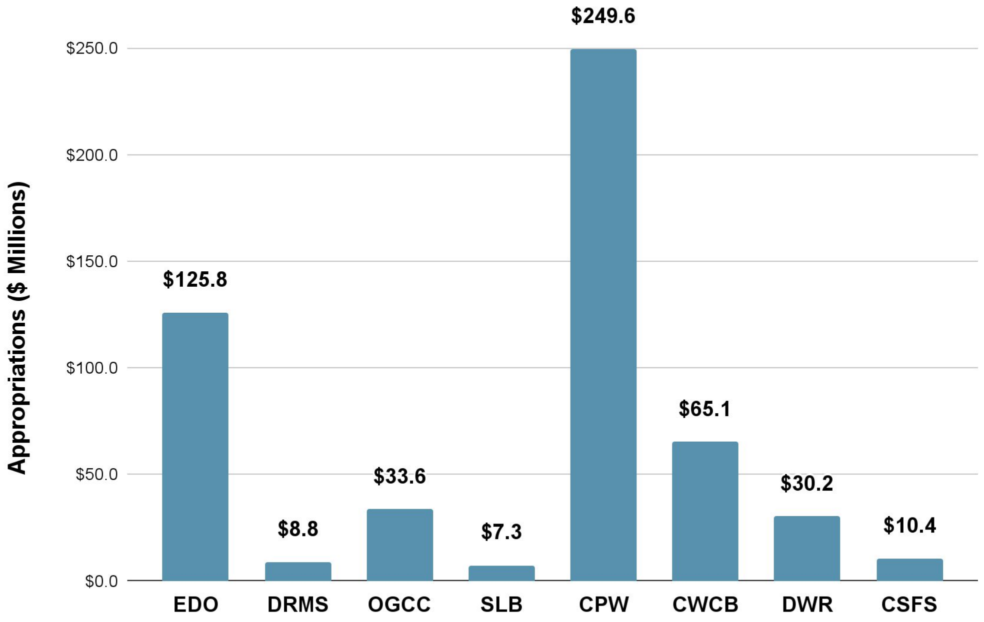
Federal Funds = $42.6M

FTE = 1,807.4

Temps = ~900-1000

Volunteers = ~132 FTE

*Includes CWCB Projects Bill



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DNR FY 2026-27 Budget Request

FY 2026-27 Budget Snapshot

Total Funds: $501.2 M
General Fund: $60.2 M
FTE: 1,840.7

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Natural Resources

FY 2026-27 Joint Budget Committee Hearing

Thursday, January 8, 2025

9:00 am – 11:00 am

Severance Tax

Revenue

1. *[Sen. Kirkmeyer]* Does DNR receive Federal Mineral Lease revenue?

Response: Yes, the CWCB Construction Fund receives ten percent of TABOR-exempt nonbonus Federal Mineral Lease revenue annually, per Section 34-63-102 (5.4)(d)(2), C.R.S. Revenue distributions vary from year to year; CWCB received $9.6 million in FY 2023-24 and $8.4 million in FY 2024-25.

2. *[Sen. Kirkmeyer]* Please provide a chart/table/visual for all Severance Tax revenue for FY 2024-25 through FY 2026-27. Please include amounts of overall revenue that go to DNR, how much the Operational Fund and the Perpetual Base Fund have received and are expected to receive, and how much the legislature should be appropriating/transferring for water and operational funds in FY 2026-27.

Response:

Table 1: Total Severance Tax Revenue (in Millions)			
Per OSPB December 2025 Forecast			
	Preliminary FY 2024-25	**Forecast FY 2025-26**	**Forecast FY 2026-27**
Revenue, excluding interest	$37.10	$133.60	$139.50
Distributions to:			
Decarbonization Tax Credits Administration	$24.00	$28.20	$15.40
Just Transition Cash Fund	$2.50	$2.60	$2.70
Department of Natural Resources	$5.30	$51.40	$60.70
DNR Severance Tax Operational Fund	*$2.65*	*$25.70*	*$30.35*
DNR Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund	*$2.65*	*$25.70*	*$30.35*
Department of Local Affairs	$5.30	$51.40	$60.70

The December 2025 revenue forecast from Governor's Office of State Planning and Budgeting (OSPB) includes estimated interest earnings for severance tax cash funds of $19.9M in FY 2025-26 and $23.5M in FY2026-27. Interest is earned separately on the balance of each individual severance tax cash fund and is not distributed through the statutory formula.

Severance tax revenues are split 50/50 between DNR and DOLA. The portion of revenues received by DNR are split again 50/50 into the Severance Tax Operational Fund and the Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund (STPBF). Any revenue collected annually between $50 million and $60 million in the STPBF is directed to CDPHE's small communities water and wastewater grant fund. Based on the December 2026 OSPB revenue forecast, each fund is projected to receive $25.7M in FY 2025-26 and $30.3M in FY 2026-27 based on OSPB's forecast. These amounts don't include reductions for budget balancing actions included in the November 1, 2025, budget request totaling $6.6M per fund in FY 26 and FY 27.

Severance tax is the most volatile and difficult-to-forecast revenue stream in the state, with a relative standard deviation of 70%. Collections are primarily driven by the price and production of oil and gas and the offsetting impacts of the ad valorem tax credit. Unlike other fee-based funds, DNR does not have ability to control severance tax revenue, which makes internal fund management tools, like the 200% Operational Fund reserve requirement, especially important. It is essential to maintain a robust reserve to ensure continuity of operations for any programs that continue to be supported by the Operational Fund given the overall volatility of the revenue stream.

Table 2 shows the actual expenses and projected budgets for the Severance Tax Operational Fund, but does not include any transfers of revenue that may be proposed for budget balancing purposes.

Table 2: DNR Severance Tax Operational Fund (Actual Expenses and Projected Budgets)			
Program	**FY 2024-25 Actuals**	**FY 2025-26 Appropriation**	**FY 2026-27 Request**
Energy and Carbon Management Commission	$6,148,067	$6,148,067	$6,148,067
Avalanche Information Center	$1,326,758	$1,522,456	$1,568,130
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	$5,016,718	$8,000,603	$6,083,632
CO Water Conservation Board	$1,236,887	$1,236,887	$1,236,887

Table 2: DNR Severance Tax Operational Fund			
(Actual Expenses and Projected Budgets)			
CPW - Parks	$2,243,971	$2,521,682	$2,521,682
DNR Species Conservation Trust Fund	$5,000,000	$5,000,000	$5,000,000
CPW Aquatic Nuisance Species Fund	$4,006,005	$4,006,005	$4,006,005
Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program	$5,000,000	$5,000,000	$5,000,000
Colorado Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Grant Fund	$700,000	$700,000	$700,000
Colorado School of Mines CO Geological Survey	$1,830,819	$1,898,062	$1,955,004
Core Programs Total	**$32,509,225**	**$36,033,762**	**$34,219,407**

The Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund is continuously appropriated for certain purposes and, unlike the Severance Tax Operational Fund, is primarily utilized for loans and grants for water projects that extend for many years. For that reason, expenditures from the Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund are informed by long term revenue trends rather than by revenues in any given fiscal year. Multi-year average revenue received by the Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund includes about $45 million from severance tax distributions. Additionally, because it is a revolving loan fund, the Perpetual Base Fund receives about $11 million from treasury and loan interest and $14 million in loan principal returned to the fund each year. Total combined average annual receipts into the fund are about $70 million.

Severance Tax Operational Fund

3. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please provide a detailed list of all the FTE that are funded through the Severance Tax Operational Fund.

Response: The following table, Table 3, presents the quantity of FTE funded by the Severance Tax Operational Fund. Severance Tax FTE are allocated as the proportion of severance tax funding to total line item funding. With the exception of the EDO Personal Services long bill line, each of the lines is directly funded with appropriations from the Operational Fund. The EDO Personal Services line is funded through reappropriated funds, including the Operational Fund collected through indirect cost recoveries on cash funds from DNR divisions.

Table 3: Department of Natural Resources FTE Funded by Severance Tax		
Division	**Long Bill Line Item**	**FTE**
Executive Director's Office	Personal Services	4.6
Executive Director's Office	Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund	2.5
Energy & Carbon Management Commission	Program Costs	55.9
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	Coal Program Costs	19.0
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	Inactive Mines Program Costs	17.8
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	Minerals Program Costs	15.0
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	Mine Safety Program	4.0
Reclamation, Mining, & Safety	Blaster Certification Program	1.0
CO Avalanche Information Center	Program Costs	6.3
Parks & Wildlife	State Park Operations	11.5
Parks & Wildlife	Aquatic Nuisance Species Program	4.0
Colorado Water Conservation Board	Federal Emergency Mgt Asst	0.3
	Total	**141.9**

4. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] If Operational Funds were not available, from where would the Department fund request R-06 Mine Safety Inspections and Training Support?

Response: The only existing alternative state fund source for the Mine Safety and Training Support program besides the Severance Tax Operational Fund is the General Fund.

5. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please comment on the following:

- What is the likelihood that discretionary programs will remain fully funded in the near future?
- If no Operational Fund dollars went to Parks and Wildlife, the Geological Survey, the Water Conservation Board, or the Avalanche Information Center, how would the Department replace that funding?
- To what extent would the programming/staffing in the above programs be impacted without Operational Fund dollars?

Response: Both of the December 2025 Legislative Council Staff and OSPB economic forecasts are projecting revenue and available fund balance to support all statutory approved uses of the Severance Tax Operational Fund (Operational Fund) for FY2025-26 through FY 2027-28. However, neither forecast is predicting sufficient revenue to the Operational Fund to achieve the 200% statutory reserve requirement during this time period. Additionally, each forecast acknowledges potential revenue volatility. A discussion of alternative funding sources and programmatic impacts follows.

- *Colorado Geological Survey:* The Colorado Geological Survey is a statutory state agency (created by the state legislature in 1907) that was transferred to the Colorado School of Mines in 2013 pursuant to HB 12-1355 and is currently statutorily separate from the Department of Natural Resources. The current funding model for the Geological Survey is a mix of state General Fund, state severance tax and School of Mines institutional general funds.

- *Colorado Avalanche Information Center:* The only alternative source of revenue for refinancing CAIC from the Operational Fund is General Fund. Although CAIC has made considerable advancements in diversifying its available funding for backcountry avalanche forecasting in recent years, the organization still relies on Severance Tax for a significant portion of its funding for this work. CAIC receives limited funding for backcountry forecasting and awareness from the Snowmobile Recreation Cash Fund ($2,000 per year), the US Forest Service ($50,000 per year), and Colorado Parks and Wildlife courtesy of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass ($1 million). CAIC is also authorized to enter into agreements to provide training and materials to the general public, industries, and units of local government, but is only able to recover the direct costs of providing the training and materials.

  CAIC also serves as a vendor to CDOT for a contract to fund CAIC's highway forecasting; it would not be contractually appropriate or possible to charge backcountry forecasting activities to the CDOT funding for highway forecasting CDOT funds are not available to CAIC for unrestricted purposes.

  Severance Tax currently provides about half of the funds necessary to provide backcountry avalanche forecasting and awareness for recreationalists and businesses alike. Without this funding, CAIC would be forced to reduce its backcountry avalanche operations to the same extent, potentially risking health, life, and safety.

- *Colorado Water Conservation Board:* If Operational Fund dollars were cut, CWCB would still need to support the projects that it currently funds and would work with the General Assembly on an alternative source, such as the CWCB Construction Fund. The Operational Fund supports projects, programs, and studies that advance the Colorado Water Plan and research undertaken in partnership with higher education institutions. This work includes: weather modification support, modeling to inform Colorado River negotiations, modeling to inform South Platte River Endangered Species Act compliance, flood mitigation, cost share for CWCB's annual Community Assistance Program FEMA grant, and other efforts that are central to CWCB's mission.

Refinancing the division's Severance Tax Operational Fund dollars with the Construction Fund would reduce funding otherwise available for water project loans and grants from the CWCB Construction Fund by an equal amount.

- *Colorado Parks and Wildlife:* If CPW were to no longer receive transfers or appropriations from the Severance Tax Operational Fund for its State Park Operations, Species Conservation, and Aquatic Nuisance Species programs, it would need to fund up to $11.5M in additional costs, per year, within existing resources that are already constrained. CPW would fund State Park Operations from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund, its Species Conservation program through the Wildlife Cash Fund, and Aquatic Nuisance Species program through a combination of the Parks and Wildlife cash funds. With the lack of the dedicated funding sources provided by the Operational Fund, these programs would compete with the division's other programs for funding through its internal annual budget process. Additional details of the potential impacts and tradeoffs can be found in the response to the following question.

Senate Bill 25-040, "Future of Severance Tax & Water Funding," established a Task Force to study severance taxes and to develop recommendations for ways to continue funding water needs in the face of decreasing severance tax revenue. The Task Force's ongoing work includes identifying means of replacing severance tax revenues transferred for budget balancing in previous years and alleviating the need for similar transfers in the future. A final report with findings and recommendations, including potential impacts to the Severance Tax Operational Fund, will be provided to the Water Resources and Agriculture Review Committee during the 2026 legislative interim.

6. [Rep. Sirota and Brown] Please provide more detail on the reduction in state park operations that may result from a reduction in severance tax for state parks, and the reduction in wildlife operations as a result of refinancing the severance tax for certain programs (e.g., Species Conservation Trust Fund, Aquatic Nuisance Species) with the Wildlife Cash Fund. What specifically would be reduced?

Response: Loss of severance tax for CPW's programs would not only result in impacts to CPW's programs currently funded by severance tax but also to those that are not. A lack of severance tax would require CPW's cash funds to support a broader set of obligations, which would result in reduced capacity, delayed implementation, or scaled-back services across programs. CPW would determine specific decisions through its internal budget process, likely through a combination of reductions in operations and services, holding vacant positions open, and deferring capital projects. Potential program impacts follow.

- *Aquatic Nuisance Species Program:* The Aquatic Nuisance Species program has some ability to absorb Operational Fund-supported program costs from the Aquatic Nuisance Species Fund balance on a one-time or time limited basis without reducing ANS capacity or displacing other CPW operations. CPW would prioritize addressing emerging issues and ensuring the continuation of the program, however depending upon the level of cuts, spending authority reductions and cash fund revenue constraints, some reductions may be necessary. Programmatic impacts may include reduced inspection and decontamination coverage, fewer staffed locations or hours during peak seasons, and reduced monitoring and outreach.

  However, an ongoing reduction of Operational Fund support will likely significantly reduce the program's long term ability to manage the presence and spread of aquatic nuisance species in Colorado. It would also constrain the agency's ability to respond to emergent issues such as the outbreak of adult zebra mussels in the Colorado River

- *Species Conservation Trust Fund:* Species Conservation Trust Fund projects would be forced to compete against all other wildlife priorities, resulting in reduced or delayed conservation actions for at-risk species and reduced technical assistance and oversight.

- *State Park Operations:* State park operations consist mainly of on-the-ground staffing and direct operating expenditures required to keep parks and waters open, safe, and accessible to the public. Funding is fully allocated among operating, planned initiatives, and ongoing capital expenditures. As a result, a reduction of approximately $4.5 million in severance tax support would be addressed through targeted reductions in staffing and operating expenditures. While CPW would prioritize public safety and essential functions, reductions at this level would inevitably affect customer experience and service delivery. Specific impacts would include:
  - Staffing reductions, primarily through fewer seasonal hires, shorter seasonal employment periods, and reduced daily staffing coverage at

parks.

    - Reduced operating hours and services, including shorter hours for visitor centers and staffed facilities, and potential closures or limited access to select amenities during low-use periods.
    - Deferred routine maintenance, such as less frequent restroom cleaning, trash removal, trail grooming, and minor repairs, increasing long-term maintenance risk.
    - Reduced discretionary services, such as interpretive and educational programming.
    - Reduced operational flexibility, limiting the ability to respond to peak visitation, special events, or unexpected operational issues.

  Because parks are a customer-facing system, these reductions would be experienced by visitors as fewer staff, lower service levels, and deferred upkeep, particularly during peak seasons. Alternatively, the parks capital program could be reduced by an amount to offset the lost revenue, increasing deferred maintenance when identified projects are already in excess of available funding.

- *Wildlife Operations:* The Wildlife Cash Fund supports core wildlife management functions and is already subject to significant ongoing demands, including core operations and new initiatives. Refinancing approximately $4.5–$7.0 million of severance tax-supported programs (e.g., Species Conservation Trust Fund and Aquatic Nuisance Species) into the Wildlife Cash Fund would require trade-offs across existing priorities. This would add pressure to core wildlife operations and increase risk to service continuity. Expected impacts include:
    - fewer seasonal staff to help maintain wildlife areas or assist with collection of species data;
    - hindered wildlife conflict response coordination, including reduced ability to meet with impacted communities to work through issues; and
    - delays in equipment replacement, potentially delaying work or necessitating costly repairs.

- *Parks and Wildlife Capital Programs:* Another potential outcome is that the wildlife and parks capital programs could be reduced by an amount to offset the lost revenue, or deferred maintenance could be increased. However, necessary maintenance projects are already in excess of available funding. CPW's capital investment has been reduced over recent years, and any further reductions could degrade infrastructure and limit park expansion over the long term.

7. [Rep. Brown] Please provide more detail on the trade-offs of reducing the severance tax allocation for the ANS program. Who is being disproportionately impacted if revenue were to come from a different fund source, like the Wildlife or Parks Cash Fund?

Response: Through legislative action over the years, the General Assembly has identified the state's multigenerational water infrastructure and the potential impacts of aquatic nuisance species as a statewide concern, not just a concern of recreationalists and sportspersons. Taxes assessed on the severance of minerals have historically been employed to protect this vital water infrastructure for the benefit of future generations of all Coloradans. Water providers, industry, residential water users, and agricultural producers all rely on mussel-free infrastructure to keep water intake pipes and treatment facilities operational. Because aquatic nuisance species are a statewide concern, relying on fees charged to recreationalists and sportspersons to support the public at large disproportionally impacts CPW users.

The Aquatic Nuisance Species program has some ability to absorb program costs from the Aquatic Nuisance Species Cash Fund balance for the near term. However, relying on fund balance for current operations would constrain the agency's ability to respond to emergent issues such as the outbreak of adult zebra mussels in the Colorado River. To maintain a fund balance to address emerging issues and ensure the program's long-term sustainability, some reductions may be necessary. Programmatic impacts may include reduced inspection and decontamination coverage, fewer staffed locations or hours during peak seasons, and reduced monitoring and outreach.

8. *[Sen. Kirkmeyer]* When you say that CAIC is outside of what the enterprise is doing… what are statutory requirements in regards to the enterprise and what *should* the enterprise be doing?

Response: During the December 9, 2025, Budget Briefing on Severance Tax Operational Fund uses within DNR, JBC staff noted that the CAIC falls outside of the CPW enterprise. Section 33-9-105, C.R.S., designates the Parks and Wildlife Commission and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) as a TABOR enterprise. CPW's missions are established in Section 33-1-101, C.R.S., for wildlife and Section 33-10-101, C.R.S., for parks. The organization's combined statutory mission is legally centered on resource management with a mandate to perpetuate wildlife resources, provide a quality state parks system, and offer sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that inspire active stewardship of Colorado's natural resources. In contrast, the Colorado Avalanche Information Center (CAIC) is established under Section 24-33-116, C.R.S., as a separate entity distinct from the Parks and Wildlife Commission and CPW enterprise. CAIC is statutorily mandated to promote safety by reducing the impact of avalanches on recreation, industry, and transportation across Colorado through a dedicated program of forecasting and education. In accordance with fiscal procedures published by the Office of the State Controller, any funding transferred from CPW (a TABOR enterprise) to CAIC (a non-enterprise) becomes subject to TABOR.

Energy and Carbon Management Commission

Conservation Levy and Fee Reserve

9. [Sen. Amabile] How much more revenue would be generated if the conservation levy were increased to 1.7 mills?

Response: Table 4 demonstrates the estimated TABOR revenue increase for FY 2026-27 and FY 2027-28 if the levy were raised to 1.7 mills, which is the current statutory maximum. Conservation levy revenue collections are subject to the TABOR revenue limit.The conservation levy has not been increased since 2020. Calculations below are based on an assumption that the five month average commodity price through November 2025 of $63.11/bbl is held constant. As of January 5, 2026, DNR has not received the December data. It is anticipated the previous quarter's average price will be lower than the previous five month average and that oil price may continue to fall in the coming months.

Table 4: Conservation Levy Revenue Projections		
	FY 2026-27	**FY 2027-28**
Projected Levy at 1.5 mills	25,236,568	26,117,170
Projected levy at 1.7 mills	26,926,559	27,459,337
Increase in TABOR revenue	**1,689,991**	**1,342,167**

10. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Is the revenue generated by the conservation levy required to go to the ECMC Fund?

Response: Yes, according to Section 34-60-124(1)(a), C.R.S., the revenue generated from the conservation levy is required to go to the ECMC cash fund.

11. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Can you please describe in more detail how the Uncommitted Fee Reserve balance in the Schedule 9 relates to the overall ECMC Fund balance?

Response: Fund balance is an accounting term that is the net value of all assets (cash and receivables) and deferred outflows of resources less liabilities and deferred inflows of resources. This calculation includes amounts pertaining to the fund's share of the overall PERA net pension liability and does not necessarily equate to cash on hand at year-end. According to statute [Section 24-75-402 (2)(h) C.R.S.], the Uncommitted Fee Reserve is the portion of the fund balance excluding long-term assets, nonmonetary assets, and any portion of revenues in the fund derived from non-fee sources [Section 34-60-122 (1)(b) C.R.S.].

Orphaned Wells Mitigation Enterprise

12. [Rep. Taggart] When the Orphaned Wells Mitigation Enterprise was created, what happened to the dollars that were made available from no longer paying for plugging and reclaiming abandoned wells?

Response: The spending authority for the plugging and reclaiming abandoned wells was eliminated on June 30, 2024, with the creation of the Orphan Well Mitigation Enterprise. As of June 30, 2024, the five-year average spend for the plugging and reclaiming of abandoned wells was $3.7M per year. Since 2023, ECMC has also received new directions from the General Assembly and hired FTE authorized by legislation that increased current and projected expenditures from the energy and carbon management cash fund, shown in the table below, and did not need to increase the conservation levy, identify new funding sources, or request General Fund to absorb these additional costs. These new legislatively-directed expenditures largely absorbed the amount of money that ECMC did not expend by transferring the costs of plugging and reclaiming orphaned wells to the Orphan Well Mitigation Enterprise (OWME). In addition to absorbing added legislative authorities and responsibilities, ECMC is able to use existing funds - without increasing the conservation levy - to modernize its information system as approved in HB24-1346.

Table 5: Recent Legislations Funded from ECMC Cash Fund

Legislation and New Workload	CF Appropriation
SB23-285 - Energy and Carbon Management Regulation In Colorado – Regulating Geothermal operations and Study regulating and permitting Hydrogen	$1,115,888
SB23-016 - Greenhouse Gas Emission – CCS - Primacy for Class VI Injection Wells – Greenhouse Pollution Reduction	317,122
HB23-1294 Pollution Protection Measures – Cumulative Impacts	402,491
SB23-186 Methane Seepage Raton Basin – study on capturing methane seepage in the Raton Basin and using water resulting from	558,500

Table 5: Recent Legislations Funded from ECMC Cash Fund	
Legislation and New Workload	**CF Appropriation**
such capture	
HB23-1069 Study Biochar in Plugging Wells – Partnership with Higher Education	5,600
HB23-1242 Water Conservation in Oil & Gas Operations – Produced Water Consortium	464,512
SB24-230 Oil and Gas Production Fees - ECMC is required to calculate the average oil and gas spot prices from the previous quarter and publish the prices on the website	Within existing resources
SB24-229 Ozone Mitigation Measures – Community liaisons – resource for communities and assisting community members with the commission	179,127
SB24-212 Local Governments Renewable Energy Projects - provide technical support to local and tribal governments related to renewable energy projects	95,490
Total	**$3,138,730**

State Land Board

Strategic Plan

13. [Rep. Taggart] Please explain the methodology, thought process, and practicalities of enacting and following a strategic plan that lasts for 8 years.

Response: The State Land Board has a dual mission cast in the constitution: manage an endowment of assets held in perpetual, intergenerational public trusts for the financial support of Colorado's public schools and other public institutions by generating reasonable and consistent income over time, and protecting and enhancing the long-term productivity and sound stewardship of working trust lands. The current 8 Year Strategic Plan was developed and implemented to address financial management, sound land management and good governance, to ensure that the Board is acting in a transparent, consistent, efficient and effective way. The term of the current 8 year plan was developed to end on the Land Board's 150th anniversary. The division is undergoing strategic planning now for a new 5 year plan going into effect during 2026, which also coincides with the 150 year anniversary. The State Land Board has captured several opportunities for innovation and growing diversity in its revenue generation because of its 8 year plan - and thanks to the guidance, SLB has been exceptionally consistent in its decision making.

Appropriations

14. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please provide a breakdown of how the total appropriation to SLB is allocated.

Response: SLB's appropriation comes from lease revenue cash funds, annually. For fiscal year 2025-26, SLB's appropriation breaks down into general categories as follows:

Table 6: State Land Board Appropriations FY 2025-26	
Purpose	**Appropriation**
Program Costs:	
Personnel & Benefits	$8,601,460
Office Operations & IT	$755,912
Legal & Risk Management	$1,898,533
Reappropriated Funds:	
Hunting & Fishing Access property repairs	$225,000
Total Long Bill Appropriation	**$11,480,905**

15. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please explain why working with History Colorado on the discovery and management of culturally sensitive artifacts and sites is insufficient for the SLB's purposes. What value would a dedicated FTE add?

Response: Working with History Colorado and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) helps ensure that SLB staff are proceeding on culturally and historically sensitive lands with appropriate caution as concerns artifacts and physical signs of settlements and habitation are discovered. However, a number of factors in land ownership at SLB's scale present challenges that are better managed by the State Land Board rather than SHPO. Multiple simultaneous lease types each bear different impacts on the landscape, and the variety of uses is different on every property. The position needs to be a subject matter expert on SLB working lands when working with SLB lessees and their own expert advisors in their uses of the land and the impacts that accompany those uses. The position needs to be adept at building resource management plans that address cultural resources and incorporate the wide variety of other SLB management plans for consistency of planning and actions taken across the landscape. The position also needs to dedicate the time necessary to build strong relationships with Tribal governments and Tribal communities in planning and undertaking the aforementioned work. It is important that this relationship building is between the parties representing direct interest in the land and is staffed with a dedicated resource to ensure continual interface and collaborative problem solving.

16. *[Sen. Kirkmeyer]* What is the total number of renewable energy leases that the SLB manages and how much revenue did those leases generate in FY 2024-25?

Response: Seventy-nine renewable energy leases under management in fiscal year 2024-25 (35 leases are in planning phases, 44 leases are in production) generating $4,400,183 in lease revenue. Planning leases generate revenue by allowing operators to access trust lands for project siting and engineering, and demonstrate land control to partners and regulators. Leases convert from planning to production when the projects are activated for their purpose - typically generating or storing power. Solar leases in production occupy 2,745 acres. Wind leases in production occupy 404 acres and support a variety of other uses simultaneously, including agriculture.

17. *[Rep. Sirota]* Please respond to JBC staff's suggestion that reporting requirements be placed on SLB requests for FTE. What revenue generation estimates exist for the budget requests that the Committee is considering for FY 2026-27?

Response: SLB is supportive and welcomes the opportunity to work with JBC staff to establish reasonable and appropriate financial performance metrics on SLB budget requests. However, there are nuances and complexities that need to be considered in establishing performance measures.

This challenge is due to the State Land Board's two-part constitutional mandate: to generate reasonable and consistent revenue over time and uphold and enhance the stewardship of trust lands. While most positions at the State Land Board contribute to the pursuit of revenue in one way or another, some are focused on land stewardship and conservation efforts that don't have a neatly measured short-term return on investment number that can be calculated. However, the constitutional stewardship mandate aims at ensuring the long-term productivity - and therefore long-term ROI - from sustainable management of state trust lands. A clean representation of financial ROI is further complicated by the nature of the work being shared across small teams where multiple positions contribute to the success of each piece of business.

One of the two SLB budget requests this year is for an expansion to SLB's energy team. In fiscal year 2023-24, the current energy team audited payments made to SLB on oil and gas royalties totaling $33.5 million dollars; 16% of the $209 million in royalties paid to SLB that year. In that audit, 100% of the leases reviewed had violations. While some violations amounted to small infractions, many violations triggered lease defaults. Staff recovered $9.4 million in royalties and interest not paid to SLB. While those findings are exceptional, it is reasonable to suggest that findings in the future could be of similar scale. The greater the number of auditors engaged in the work, the more promptly unpaid revenues can be found. This staff also intercepts those operators who cannot perform their duties per the lease contract and frees those trust assets to be leased by operators who can be successful.

Recent additions to staff have been requested, in part to pursue innovations in revenue generating businesses that focus on good stewardship, but these programs remain in initial developmental stages. Ecosystems services leasing, for example, puts land stewardship to work directly, through carbon sequestration and species mitigation, through which the improvement of the landscape can be measured and sold in a marketplace to generate revenue for the trust beneficiaries.

Macroeconomic factors also muddy the direct comparison: it may be possible in one or two years time to say that the addition of an FTE to renewable energy leasing, for example, is responsible for a precise increase in lease revenue, but this does not take into account that the industry is driving an especially large amount of business toward SLB currently. The work of the business line is no less busy or impactful in years when revenue declines because deal flow has changed, or deals require deeper analysis per project, and thus, fewer leases convert from planning phases to production.

Revenue

18. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please comment on the following:

- What percentage and number of acres of state trust lands are not leased out currently?
- Please describe the ongoing process of discovering culturally sensitive artifacts and historically significant sites on trust lands.

Response: Of the 2.8 million surface acres owned by the State Land Board, essentially zero acres remain unleased. 96% of lands support a grazing lease, while other lease types layer simultaneously onto trust lands resulting in multiple leases impacting the same acre. The 4% not leased for grazing are leased for, among other things, crop production, commercial buildings and ground leases, water storage, utilities installations and others. An acre may be covered by two to ten or more leases simultaneously, representing a wide array of lease types from mineral development to recreation to rights of way.

Of 4 million subsurface acres, roughly 11%, or 430,172 acres, are leased for solid mineral and oil and gas development. The oil and gas leasing process includes operator companies nominating acres they have interest in and those lands/minerals being bid on during an auction. Minerals nomination often overestimates the acres needed for development such that the acres ultimately developed are a fraction of those under lease, and portions of an existing lease can then be re-leased to other operators. Nomination activity has increased again in the past 9 months after several quarters of slowing.

State Land Board minerals leasing provides a good example of the kinds of work required to manage culturally sensitive and historic sites on trust lands. Existing staff manage compliance to lease provisions, but ensuring the development and upkeep of lease provisions can be better managed through a dedicated staff position, such as the one requested. Oil and gas leases currently contain the following provision:

> *Historical, Prehistorical, and Archaeological Resources:*
>
> *The state of Colorado reserves to itself title to all historical, prehistorical, and archaeological resources in all lands, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other areas owned by the state or any county, city and county, city, town, district, or other political subdivision of the state (CRS 24-80-401 to 411, and 24-80-1301 to 1305). Under no circumstances may any person injure, destroy, disturb, mar, appropriate, collect, remove, alter, or excavate any historical, prehistorical, paleontological or archaeological site or resource (collectively, "cultural resources") on state lands. Discovery or indication of cultural resources shall be immediately brought to the attention of the Lessor and the State Archaeologist. Lessee shall comply with the requirements of C.R.S. § 24-80-401 through 411, as the same may be amended from time to time.*
>
> *Prior to any surface disturbance or before submitting an Application for a Permit to Drill ("APD") or a spacing application, Lessee shall arrange for a Class III archaeological survey of all sites subject to surface development unless waived by Lessor in writing. The surveyor shall provide the completed survey, including site management recommendations, to Lessor and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation ("OAHP").*

> *If the Class III survey or OAHP identifies any cultural resources on the Leased Lands, Lessor shall consult with OAHP and determine whether any specific site management activities will be required. Lessor, in its sole and absolute discretion, may impose additional requirements, conditions, restrictions, or stipulations under this Lease to protect or preserve cultural resources. Lessee acknowledges that Lessor is under no obligation to refund any bonus payment, rental or fee paid under this Lease.*

Survey responses are submitted to the OAHP to help establish their database of resources. Prior to this provision being implemented, leases required a consultation with OAHP to determine if the site planned for development had any Registered state or federal cultural resources and would have to create a plan with OAHP if any were identified.

19. [Sen. Amabile] Please provide a detailed explanation of the $4.4 billion value of the trust, including:

- How is the value determined?
- What is the breakdown between liquid and non-liquid assets?
- What other components outside of the Permanent Fund are included in the valuation?
- What is the value of increasing the valuation of the trust to $5.0 billion?
- What is the return on the assets and how does that relate to the value of those assets?

Response: The $4.4 billion value of trust assets is determined in a few ways, and varies over time through appreciation and revenue generating capacity. Each portion of the trust is described as follows.

- Land - $2.2 billion; low liquidity. The value of land is determined by appraisals and comparisons to land transactions of similar characteristics (similar in many respects to the housing market), and taking the resulting $/acre values revealed by those tools and multiplying it across the 2.8 million acres owned.

- Commercial buildings - $100 million; low liquidity. The value is calculated using tools common to the commercial real estate industry (appraisal; revenue based valuation; market comparisons) and is based in part by a building's capacity to generate revenue.

- Minerals - $500 million; low liquidity. The value is determined by discounting the

10 year potential for revenue by the time-value of money. The value of minerals can vary significantly as it is tied into the market prices for oil and natural gas.

- Permanent Fund - $1.6 billion (in 2024); generally more liquid than real property assets already mentioned, but uses are strictly governed and the principal cannot be diminished. The value is the ending balance of the assets and equities held by the Treasurer in that fund on June 30 of each year.

Setting a goal such as ‘increasing the value of the Trust to $5.0 billion’ ensures that staff efforts grow the whole trust to serve current and future trust beneficiaries. The ultimate value of trust assets is determined by those assets’ ability to generate revenue. Staff activities include those program development activities that increase the value of trust assets, including marketing, price management, pursuing innovative uses, and establishing long term management plans that enhance assets’ ability to generate future revenue. As leasing increases in complexity, and innovations allow more simultaneous leasing of each acre, the ability of each acre to generate revenue increases, becoming more valuable. An intergenerational, perpetual trust must be managed for positive growth to keep up with inflation and ensure steady returns forever.

The expected and realized returns on assets vary based on asset types, location and risk profile. In general, trust asset values are proportional to their income potential. Total returns come from a combination of income generation (yield) and appreciation. In general, the expected returns on the permanent fund and commercial properties are higher than on agricultural lands. SLB seeks to achieve total returns of 5.5-7% on new acquisitions supported by its many lines of business. Permanent Fund returns are generally significantly more variable than land values. The Permanent Fund is managed by an advisory Board and the Treasurer, separate from the Board of Land Commissioners.

20. [Rep. Taggart] Please provide a detailed balance sheet and income statements on the $4.4 billion in assets.

Response: Each November, SLB provides the Legislature a report called the Income & Inventory report that contains the kind of financial detail being requested in this question. The State Land Board does not issue a balance sheet type document on trust assets. The bulk value of trust assets as might be categorized on a balance sheet are found in the response to the preceding question.

21. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please provide updated revenue amounts for FY 2024-25 to add a column to JBC staff’s table on page 17 of the briefing document.

Table 7: State Land Board Revenue FY 2024-25	
Category	**Revenue**
Mineral	$216,499,273
Surface	$33,379,353
Commercial	$8,588,005
Permanent Fund Income	$57,390,636
Non-trust Fee Revenue	$111,800
Total	**$315,969,064**

22. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] What is the estimated return on investment from the 7.0 FTE that the Committee has approved over the last several years, identified in JBC staff's briefing document on page 17.

Response: As noted on page 17 of the JBC Staff briefing memo, SLB has been given approval to add 7.0 FTE to its staff over the past three years. Because the division's work must balance the short-term return on assets that comes from leases, with the long-term return on assets that comes from sound land stewardship, the story told by a point-in-time ROI isn't a straightforward one. That being said, the revenue generating programs that have grown through these additions to staff are showing increased revenue. As a reminder, SLB revenue is cash funds, and the bulk of it is TABOR exempt. It is derived from contracts for the temporary use of natural resources, and not fees.

- Total revenue over the past three fiscal years: $899,273,326
- Total of new costs: $1,067,328. Costs represent the salary and benefits of each FTE.
- Total of direct, new program revenue: $4,836,242
- ROI for the noted positions: 4.5X

- Water Manager:
  - Costs (3 year): $446,666
  - New Program Income (3 year): $3,257,377
  - ROI: 7.3X
- Field Operations District Resource Specialist
  - Costs (2 year): $154,064
  - No direct income component
  - Stewardship focused position ensuring leasing occurs according to lease terms to ensure long run health and performance of the land. Covers

approximately 500,000 acres.

- Carbon Sequestration Manager
    - Costs: $166,012
    - New program income: $590,250
    - ROI: 3.6X
- Regenerative Grazing & Soils Manager
    - Costs: $93,550
    - Though largely a stewardship focused role, new Program Income: $300,000
    - ROI: 3.2X
- Ecosystems Services Banking Manager
    - Costs: $120,529
    - New Program Income: $582,928
    - ROI: 4.8X
- Biodiversity Program Administrator
    - Costs: $33,931
    - No income component; a stewardship focused supporting role
- Recreation Program Administrator
    - Costs: $52,576
    - New Program Income: $105,937
    - ROI: 2.0X

These ROI calculations show the short term results already being generated, and do not yet account for the benefits of long term land stewardship.

23. [Rep. Brown] Please discuss SLB's stewardship practices and how additional FTE can bolster effective stewardship, and what the impacts are of effective stewardship on revenue generation.

Response: The State Land Board has a constitutional mandate to generate reasonable and consistent revenue in balance with long term stewardship of trust working lands. Being an intergenerational trust, good stewardship of the land today enables future generations the ability to generate revenue from the same land. Land that is impaired by damage from previous uses cannot support future uses in the same way. Staff are responsible for ensuring that lessees are held accountable to stewardship provisions today so that the opportunity for future uses is not limited.

An exceptionally insightful tool to understand SLB Stewardship is the division's Stewardship Report.

With mineral mining in particular, the Land Board promotes responsible development and extraction with the least amount of impact to the surface and other mineral estates. The goal is for the mineral resource to be extracted from a minimal footprint, and the land to be reclaimed to the original condition or better to continue revenue generation from surface uses quickly. Staff in the minerals team pursue stewardship by ensuring that lessees are operating according to contract terms that include payment for developed minerals, impact to surface lands and other lessees, reclamation of lands post-development, and the termination of lease agreements when operators cannot conduct themselves according to lease terms or state regulations. Minerals development can be accomplished in ways that minimize impacts to the land and supporting ecosystems.

Additional FTE have been requested to enable the Land Board to audit, inspect, and enforce stewardship provisions on oil and gas/mining leases. All newly issued SLB oil and gas leases contain a series of stipulations to protect land, habitat, species, biodiversity, and other natural and cultural values. Staff inspect all oil and gas wells on SLB lands to ensure compliance with lease stipulations and ECMC regulations and generally find violations on 8-10% of wells inspected. Staff audits 50 oil and gas leases (made up of a few, to dozens of wells) per year (6.25% of active leases) for compliance with lease requirements and stewardship stipulations.

In fiscal year 2023-24, 100% of the leases reviewed had violations. While some violations amounted to small infractions, many violations triggered lease defaults. Terminating non-compliant leases is an important tool to align leases with good partners who will both produce revenue for the trusts and uphold sound stewardship of the assets leased.

The request for a Tribal Liaison supports stewardship of lands through the development and maintenance of relationships with Tribal communities, taking into account historic use of lands now owned by the State Land Board to more effectively use those lands in the present day.

Parks and Wildlife

Parks and Wildlife Operations

24. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How much money has been brought in (by year) from the Keep Colorado Wild pass?

Response: Please see Table 7 for information on all state park pass revenue, including sales of the Keep Colorado Wild (KCW) Pass. Although KCW sales are increasing, this is offset by the decreasing sales of other passes; therefore, it is essential to examine total state park pass revenue to understand the overall growth in revenue.

Table 7: CPW Park Pass Revenue				
Category	**FY 2021-22**	**FY 2022-23****	**FY 2023-24**	**FY 2024-25**
Keep Colorado Wild Pass*	$0	$22,325,998	$39,670,561	$40,968,055
Other State Park Passes	$24,435,369	$18,626,592	$11,562,626	$9,441,290
Total State Park Pass Revenue	**$24,435,369**	**$40,952,590**	**$51,233,187**	**$50,409,345**
Year-over-year Change	N/A	67.60%	25.10%	-1.61%
* Keep Colorado Wild Pass revenue is prior to distributions to other entities as required by statute				
** Keep Colorado Wild Passes were first available for purchase January 1, 2023, so FY 2022-23 reflects partial year of sales				

25. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please provide the balance of the Parks Cash Fund.

Response: As reflected in the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund's FY 2026-27 Schedule 9, the fund's net cash assets totaled $84,161,669 as of June 30, 2025. The net cash assets figure provided here, which represents current assets less current liabilities, presents a more accurate representation of the fund's actual operating balance than the fund balance, as the full fund balance includes accounting adjustments for long-term assets and liabilities and deferred inflows and outflows of resources, such as the fund's portion of the State's net pension liability. CPW relies on both the fund's net cash assets and its annual revenue to support anticipated FY 2025-26 operating expenses of $135M and its long-term capital construction obligations. CPW estimates the fund's total FY 2025-26 expenditures will be $10M greater than collected revenues for the same period, and anticipates similar expenditure and revenue patterns continuing for the nearterm. This will gradually deplete the cash balance over time to cover necessary division costs.

26. [Rep. Brown] Why do residents that want to buy a big game license need to also buy a small game or turkey license? Please explain license purchase requirements.

Response: CPW regulations, as determined by the Parks and Wildlife Commission, require that an individual purchase a qualifying license if they plan to enter the big game limited license draw. Qualifying licenses are defined as either a small game or a turkey license; however, these licenses are not required for a person to purchase an over-the-counter (OTC) license or a leftover big game license. The requirement to purchase a product before applying for the limited license drawing is a common practice among state wildlife agencies, ensuring that individuals financially support the division's wildlife management efforts, even if they do not receive a license through the limited license draw.

Many other Western states require a base hunting license, which does not include any hunting privileges, in order to be eligible for the limited license draw. Likewise, under CPW's previous rules, individuals who applied for the big game draw and earned preference points for deer, elk, bear, and pronghorn were not required to purchase a license. Instead, hunters paid an application fee to cover the cost of running the draw and also paid the habitat stamp fee, which is earmarked for expenditure on specific activities. The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission employed its current qualifying license model so that the cost to enter the draw could benefit the applicant in more ways than just applying for the draw. The Commission selected existing annual small game or turkey hunting licenses to serve as the qualifying license, rather than a separate, standalone stamp or permit.

27. [Rep. Brown] What is the Department's intended process to hire a new CPW Director? Will it remain the same process as in previous years, in which the CPW Commission is consulted as part of the process?

Response: The timeline and process to hire a new CPW Director will remain the same as previous years, including involvement by the Parks and Wildlife Commission. In accordance with statute [Section 33-9-103(1)(a), C.R.S.], the commission, with the consent of the executive director, shall appoint the director. The director shall possess such qualifications as may be established by the commission, the executive director, and the state personnel director.

The job announcement closed January 4, 2026. The Parks and Wildlife Commission is scheduled to interview top candidates on January 28, 2026, with an expected appointment of a Director by the end of February.

28. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Why didn't the Department consult with the CPW Commission in regards to the dismissal of Mr. Davis? Was there an agreement that was put in place between Mr. Davis and the Department (regarding his departure), and if so, please provide the content of that agreement.

Response: The Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources has management oversight over the CPW Director and is the Appointing Authority for all Division Directors. The Parks and Wildlife Commissioners were informed of the leadership transition. Per statute, the Commission appoints a Director with consent of the DNR Executive Director. The content of the agreement will be sent as a separate attachment.

Wolves

29. [Sen. Amabile] How is the reintroduction going, in general? How are the already introduced wolves doing, what is the plan moving forward, and why isn't it working as well as some hoped?

Response: Overall, the reintroduction has experienced both positive and negative impacts. As of December 2025, 25 wolves have been reintroduced: ten from Oregon in December 2023, and 15 from British Columbia in January 2025. Colorado has more wolves on the ground this year than it did last year. In the Spring of 2025, four separate dens were confirmed, demonstrating reproduction, and the establishment of four separate packs in Colorado. This is positive in terms of establishing a self-sustaining wolf population.

Colorado's wolves are generally behaving as expected. While there has been wolf movement through much of western Colorado, as depicted in the monthly watershed maps that CPW produces and shares publicly, the vast concentration of wolf activity is in the northwestern portion of the state, and all four packs are in CPW's Northwest Region. There has been some exploratory movement south and east, but at this point, no territories are developing in these areas. As wolf territories are established in the state, it is anticipated that movements will be more regular throughout the territories.

Wolves have faced mortalities attributed to mountain lions, other wolves, illegal gunshot, entrapment, control actions, and some mortalities remain under investigation. While these mortalities are counterproductive to the ultimate goal of establishing a self-sustaining wolf population, they are not unexpected. The sources of mortality are not associated with any of the protocols used in the capture, transport, or release of animals, which is considered in the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan in terms of re-evaluation; therefore, they do not justify considering a pause on future reintroductions.

Regarding the plan moving forward, the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan calls for reintroducing ten to 15 animals per year for three to five years. Identifying a source for reintroductions this third year has proven challenging. CPW continues to evaluate options for additional reintroductions this winter.

30. [Rep. Brown] What is the current census of wolves in the state and were they reintroduced by CPW or did they enter the state on their own?

Response: CPW does not have a census, or full count, of all wolves in the state. Rather, a minimum count, which refers to a winter count, is provided in the FY

2024-25 Colorado Gray Wolf Annual Report. The annual report covers the wolf biological year, from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025. For the 2024-25 report, the minimum count was 15 animals, including both those that had naturally moved into the state and those reintroduced from Oregon, as well as some born in Colorado. After the count was conducted, an additional 15 wolves were reintroduced from British Columbia, with more reproduction occurring in Spring 2025. Of the 25 animals reintroduced, ten have died. An updated minimum count will be included in the next annual report, expected to be available to the public in June 2026.

31. [Sen. Kirkmeyer and Rep. Brown] Please provide an update on revenue and expenditures in FY 25-26 thus far. Please specify:

- The amount and source of funds (General Fund, which cash fund, federal funds, etc.)
- What the funds were used for (at least specifying funds for acquisition and reintroduction, producer compensation, conflict minimization)
- Specifically what the General Fund was used for
- How much funding has been received and expended from gifts, grants, and donations

Response: In FY 2025-26, revenue supporting the gray wolf program includes the following amounts.

- $1,835,732 - General Fund appropriation for implementation of Proposition 114;
- $403,210 - July to October 2025 sales of the Born to be Wild License Plate in the Wildlife Cash Fund;
- $350,000 - Appropriated General Fund transfer into the Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund;
- $15,000 - FY 2024-25 Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Director's Innovation Fund grant for a gray wolf research project paid on a reimbursement basis; and
- $549.05 - donations received from July to December 1, 2025.

CPW also has available revenue earned in prior years in several funds to support the program.

FY 2025-26 expenditures for implementation of Proposition 114 and related gray wolf legislation through December 1, 2025, are shown in Table 8. CPW carefully monitors available funds and expected costs and adjusts funding sources over the year as new information becomes available to ensure compliance with various restrictions based on legislatively defined categories. As of December 16, 2025, CPW has not initiated any capture and transport operations and therefore has no direct acquisition and reintroduction costs in the current year.

Table 8: CPW FY 2025-26 Gray Wolf Expenditures Through December 1, 2025					
Sources of Funds	**Personal Services**	**Operating**	**Wolf Compensation**	**Conflict Minimization**	**Total**
General Fund	$657,450	$0	$0	$58,504	**$715,954**
Wolf Depredation Compensation Fund	$0	$0	$4,550	$0	**$4,550**
Federal Grant / General Fund (50/50)	$0	$0	$0	$12,866	**$12,866**
Born to be Wilde License Plate	$0	$178,823	$0	$0	**$178,823**
Wildlife Cash Non-license Revenue	$4,557	$186,139	$0	$0	**$190,696**
Great Outdoors Colorado Grant	$0	$15,000	$0	$0	**$15,000**
Total	**$662,007**	**$379,962**	**$4,550**	**$71,370**	**$1,117,889**

Specific expenditures of General Fund were as follows:

- $58,504 in conflict minimization costs for gray wolf activities, including staff travel, supplies, and materials; and.
- $657,450 in permanent personal services salary and benefits costs related to gray wolf activities other than wolf acquisition and reintroduction efforts.

Through December 1, 2025 CPW has received and/or expended the following amounts from gifts, grants, and donations pertaining to gray wolf activity:

- $15,000 received and expended from a GOCO grant for a research project
- $6,433 received and expended from federal grant funding; and
- $549.05 received in donations, and $0 expended.

32. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How many range riders are employed at this time?

Response: CPW's contracts with range riders were effective from the Spring of 2025 through October 31, 2025. The range riding season is associated with the time when livestock are on allotments or in large, open grazing areas. In Colorado, this generally occurs from May through October. Therefore, CPW does not and will not have any range riders under contract from November 2025 to March 2026. During the 2025 range riding season, between 8 and 12 riders were active each month. The fluctuation in numbers was based on injury, termination of contracts for performance, and a pre-arranged shorter rider season for one range rider due to other work obligations. Additionally, the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) has two full-time, year-round, non-lethal specialists that serve as range riders.

33. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Why can't the Department utilize a third-party investigator for depredation events?

Response: CPW has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), established in May 2025 for gray wolves, that allows for third-party depredation investigations. This MOU was established to leverage additional assistance to CPW utilizing cooperating USDA staff, expertise, and the non-lethal conflict minimization programs they provide. CPW retains final determination authority for any investigations conducted by USDA staff. CPW has a long history of conducting investigations into predatory animal depredations and a robust staff trained to conduct these investigations.

34. [Sen. Kirkmeyer and Bridges] Who is responsible for carcass management and what is the Department's role? Producers have indicated that they are not getting reimbursed for the full costs of depredation, particularly for calves.

Response: As outlined in the MOU between CPW and Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA), CDA leads efforts on carcass management best management practices and programs, and is engaged with multiple counties and Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) on exploring best options for managing carcasses at the county level. The responsibilities for the management of carcasses are at the discretion of the livestock producer.

Compensation for livestock is predicated upon sales receipts or sales contracts, or through use of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service reports from the September/October preceding the date of loss, or for good cause shown. A claimant may also establish the value of losses of livestock by reliable means other than the previously mentioned methods.

35. [Sen. Amabile] How is weight loss measured for animals, and what is driving it? How is this loss assessed for producer compensation?

Response: Payment for weight loss is measured by the difference between the average weight of such animals in the claim year at the time of sale versus the average weight of such animals at the time of sale in the three years preceding the date of loss. The cause of weight loss could be for a variety of reasons. For this reason, CPW requests information for the three preceding years to compare the same values after wolf damage and presence have occurred and calculate the loss.

36. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How many claims are not paid? How long does it take from the submission of a claim to the actual payout?

Response: For confirmed gray wolf depredations, livestock producers have the option to delay filing a claim until December 31st of each year, affording them the time and opportunity to submit a ratio or itemized/indirect claim. As a result, some claims remain open for an extended period as livestock producers consider their options. Currently, 26 claims are pending. All of these pending claims are directly tied to the option that allows producers to wait until December 31 to submit and finalize their claims.

Multiple factors contribute to the time lapse between claim submittal and payment. First is the completeness of the claim, although CPW works with producers to address any missing information. Other factors that add time to the claim process include the type of claim, whether it is approved, denied, or settled, as well as the amount of time required for the claimant to accept the decision. Furthermore, claims exceeding $20,000 require approval by the Parks and Wildlife Commission, which may delay determinations and payments according to the Commission's schedule. Once a claim is complete and the decision is accepted, payments are processed quickly, with payment made within 30 days.

Colorado Water Conservation Board

R2 CWCB Water Plant Grant Program

37. [Sen. Amabile] Why does receiving more revenue mean that the Department needs more staff?

Response: Increased revenue will result in a greater number of grant applications and grant awards. Each application and award results in an increased workload. The increased workload associated with the growing grant portfolio includes pre- and post-application assistance to applicants, proactively identifying qualifying projects and applicants, application review process, site visits, compliance, document and database management, contracting support during grant award, execution and closeout, and any disposition of contracts to accommodate amendments, as well as any ongoing payment processing and reporting.

Most grant awards issued by the Water Plan Grant Program are multi-year, resulting in a cumulative workload for CWCB staff over time. Given current revenue estimates from HB 25-1311, CWCB estimates that the portfolio of active Water Plan Grants will increase by about 55 grants each year for at least five years. It is also important to note that once an award is made and work begins, regional grant managers and accounting staff are involved in the grantee payment process. Payments to grantees are disbursed on a reimbursement basis for work completed and require staff to receive and review supporting documentation to ensure that expenses are aligned with the grant agreement and comply with fiscal rules.

The current 7.0 FTE supporting the Water Plan Grant Program were authorized at a time when annual revenue was estimated at $10 million to $17 million. Annual revenue is now estimated at $33 million to over $60 million–a more than three-fold increase. If the additional staff are approved, the grant program would have administrative costs of less than 5%.

38. [Rep. Sirota] How does the Department intend to distribute the increased revenue? More grants? Fewer, bigger grants?

Response: A combination of more grants and some larger grants is expected.

During the first years after the Water Plan Grant Program's creation in 2017, funding was relatively limited, so applicants made smaller funding requests in line with funding. It was common for applicants to phase their projects to utilize funding as it became available. As revenue has increased, both the number of grants issued annually and the average size of those grants has increased. This pattern is likely to continue.

From FY 2022-23 through FY 2024-25, the average Water Plan Grant award was between $225,000 to $250,000. The Water Plan Grant Program does not have a threshold or cap on the amount of funding an applicant may request or that the CWCB may award, however, approximately 90% of awarded grants are less than $500,000 and 95% are less than $1 million. To date, there have been approximately two dozen grants greater than $1 million, the majority of which were awarded during the last two fiscal years.

Water Plan Grant recipients provide at least 50% match for construction projects and 25% match for all other project types, thereby leveraging federal and other funding to maximize impact. Large construction projects that receive Water Plan Grants for a portion of their funding also often receive loans from the Water Project Loan Program, which allows principal, as well interest, to be returned to the State to support additional projects in the future.

39. [Sen. Amabile] Does the Department also contribute towards prevention/support programs or resources related to problem gambling?

Response: The CWCB is not statutorily involved in sports betting regulation or activities. CWCB's authority extends only to the use of the Water Plan Implementation Fund to support water projects that advance the Colorado Water Plan and help ensure a secure water future.

Section 44-30-1509, C.R.S., directs a portion of each years' sports betting tax revenues to the Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Colorado Limited Gaming

Control Commission before any transfers to the CWCB Water Plan Implementation Fund take place.

This portion includes funding to DOR to offset their costs in administering and regulating sports betting, and up to $1.74 million of the total annual revenue is transferred to the Hold-Harmless fund to offset certain operators' loss of revenue attributed to sports betting and to support the Responsible Gaming Grant Program for gambling addiction prevention and support programs.

40. *[Rep. Sirota]* How much of the projected revenue increase is attributed to Proposition DD/JJ compared to H.B. 25-1311?

Response: The fiscal note to H.B. 25-1311, "Deductions for Net Sports Betting Proceeds," estimated increased TABOR-exempt revenue to the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund (WPIF) of $10 million to $12.9 million per year. The table below shows the most recent December 2025 OSPB and Legislative Council Services forecasted distributions to the Water Plan Implementation Cash Fund. The revenue resulting from H.B. 25-1311 and Proposition JJ will effectively increase annual revenues to the grant program by a projected 40 to 60 percent, which will exceed existing staff capacity for effective grant management and administration.

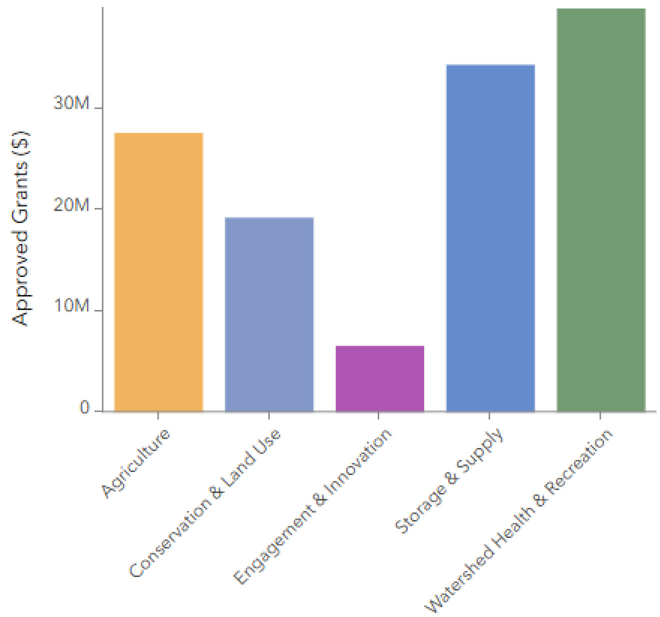
The fiscal note to H.B. 25-1311 identified the 6.5 FTE in R-02 CWCB Water Plant Grant Program for grant administration and indicated these costs would be addressed through the annual budget process based upon the technical language in statute that says the board 'may' use WPIF funds for grants and administrative staff versus 'shall'.

Table 9: Forecasted Water Plan Grant Funding Supported by Sports Betting Tax Revenue (in millions)				
Fiscal Year	**OSPB Forecast**	**LCS Forecast**	**Est. from Prop JJ***	**Est. from HB25-1311**
FY 2027-28	$43	$45	$12.8	$3.2
FY 2028-29	$52	$62	$20.1	$12.9
FY 2029-30	$54	$68	$26.1	$12.9

**December 2025 LCS Forecast*

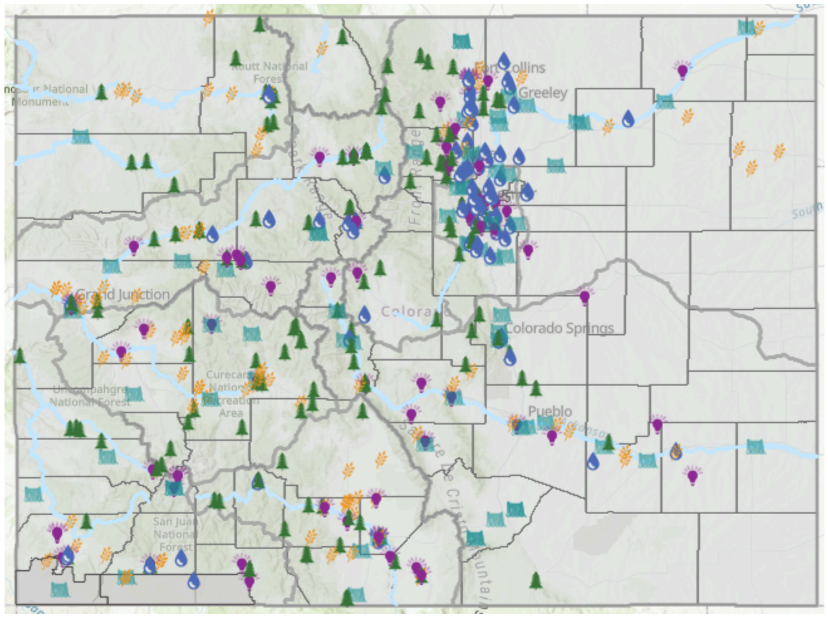
41. [Rep. Brown] Where are these grants going, who is receiving them, and what are the benefits from additional grant funding?

Response: Since the Water Plan Grant program began in 2017, the CWCB has awarded 531 grants totaling $128 million.



Water Plan Grant Awards by Project Type

The recipients of Water Plan Grants are located in all of Colorado's major river basins and 56 of Colorado's 64 counties. Recipient organizations represent all of the statutorily eligible entity types, including "municipalities, districts, enterprises, counties, cities and counties, and state agencies… mutual ditch companies, nonprofit corporations, and partnerships" and Tribes.



Water Plan Grant Project Locations

The Colorado Water Plan provides a framework for helping Colorado meet its water challenges and the Water Plan Grant Program provides funding for projects that advance that effort. Additional funding will allow the CWCB to fund more and larger projects, ultimately continuing to move the needle in implementing basin-specific and statewide water projects that provide multiple benefits to diverse water users.

The CWCB hosts an interactive platform showing Water Plan Grant awards. A few examples include:

- Farmer's Ditch Improvement Project: Located in Delta County in the Gunnison Basin, this project aims to improve water delivery and efficiency for agricultural use, maximize stream flows, and enhance ecosystem resilience for fish passage and recreational boating.
- Rye Resurgence Project: Located in the San Luis Valley in the Rio Grande Basin, this project addresses water scarcity, soil health, habitat, and robust agricultural economies by working with local producers to create a value-added market for San Luis Valley Rye- a low-water, winter cover crop.
- Larimer County Groundwater Study: Located in the South Platte Basin, this project will complete a comprehensive groundwater study, which will establish a baseline of groundwater information to support responsible development for long-term water resource sustainability in the county's ag-urban transition areas.

Wildfire Mitigation

Big Picture

42. [Sen. Amabile, Bridges, and Kirkmeyer] Please provide a comprehensive list of everything the Department does related to fire. Additionally:

- How much money is the Department spending on fire-related activities (prevention, mitigation, response, recovery, others)?
- How much for each activity (and through which programs)?
- How much of this money is distributed as grants and how much is work directly performed by the Department?
- Who is the Department coordinating with when performing the above work? (e.g., local agencies, Department of Public Safety, etc.)

Response: State supported wildfire mitigation in Colorado is shared amongst many entities, particularly the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and the Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The DNR hosts the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program.

- EDO: COSWAP
- CWCB: Wildfire Ready Watersheds
- CSFS:
    - Community Wildfire Protection Plans
    - Colorado Wildfire Risk Assessment
    - Colorado Forest Atlas
    - Home Ignition Zone Guide & Other Wildfire Mitigation Publications
    - Firewise USA
    - Live Wildfire Ready Outreach Campaign
    - Good Neighbor Authority
    - Fuels Management & Community Fire Assistance
    - Healthy Forests & Vibrant Communities Act
    - Wildfire Risk Mitigation Loan Fund/Forest Business Loan Fund
    - Biomass Utilization Grant Program
    - Timber, Forestry & Mitigation Industries Internships Programs
    - Grant Program Administration
    - Federal Consolidated Payment or Competitive Grant Programs
    - CSFS Administered State Grant Programs

CSFS spent $28.5 million in FY 2024-25 in wildfire prevention, mitigation, and response. Within the DNR, the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program supports wildfire mitigation projects before a wildfire starts, and spent nearly $8.1 million in FY 2024-25. This includes forest restoration, fuel breaks and defensible space. The Colorado Water Conservation Board holds the Wildfire Ready Watersheds program, which focuses on pre-fire planning for post-fire outcomes.

The CWCB has funded over $150 million for watershed planning, design, and implementation over the last 17 years through two programs: the Colorado Watershed Restoration Program and the Water Plan Grant Program. In the last four years, the General Assembly and the CWCB have dedicated $34 million for post fire watershed restoration and $10.8 million for pre-fire planning and implementation to mitigate impacts from post fire hazards. Of these amounts, $10.0 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding was appropriated to the Wildfire Ready Watersheds Program, the full amount of which will be expended by the end of the 2026 calendar year. The Water Plan Grant Program has awarded $39.9 million for Watershed Health and Recreation projects since its inception in 2017; $7.23 million was targeted for the 2024/25 fiscal year. COSWAP has funded approximately $19.5 million in wildfire mitigation since the inception of the program.

COSWAP fire mitigation and CWCB watershed restoration and wildfire mitigation is performed by grantees, not by the Department. Based upon CSFS average grant agreements, 26% of CSFS federal funding and 60% of state funding is distributed as fire-related grants to external entities.

COSWAP was the first wildfire mitigation program developed in DNR, in partnership with DNR, the Colorado State Forest Service and Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The three agencies entered into a MOU in 2021 pursuant to SB21-258 to work collaboratively on making strategic investments in Colorado to reduce wildfire risk to life, property and infrastructure.

43. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How many of the staff proposed budget reduction options have a federal match? What do we risk losing if these programs are cut?

Response: The staff proposal to reduce the Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities (HFVC) appropriation could result in a loss of federal funding. HFVC funding is used to meet federal match requirements for Consolidated Payment Grant (CPG) at a 1:1 match rate, resulting in a reduction of $449,128 in federal funds that may be lost by CSFS if the proposed budget reduction option was implemented.

The staff proposal to reduce the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program (FRWRM) will not result in a direct loss of federal funding to the Colorado State Forest Service, but it may result in an indeterminate loss of federal awards to grant recipients. FRWRM program applicants may include federal funds as matching funds to receive FRWRM grants, but CSFS does not track the source of applicants' matching funds.

Program Detail

44. [Rep. Sirota] What is the effectiveness of the COSWAP program? Has this been evaluated before?

Response: The COSWAP program was developed recently in 2021 by SB21-258 to quickly and effectively reduce wildfire risk to lives, property and infrastructure in strategic locations across Colorado. COSWAP was originally designed to be a one-time program, but through successful administration, partnerships and the ability to deploy funds effectively and efficiently, became a permanent grant program within DNR in 2023. COSWAP currently has two open monitoring projects to determine the effectiveness of COSWAP through the Colorado Forest Restoration Institute (CFRI). CFRI is monitoring pre and post fuel conditions, as well as determining the extent of landscape investments within distance of COSWAP projects.

With a staff of 3.0 FTE and an average of less than 5% in administration and overhead, COSWAP has been able to fully program all funds that have been appropriated by the General Assembly since inception. Based upon preliminary tracking, for each million in COSWAP funding to the Landscape Resilience Investment program 415 acres are treated, on average. For each $1 million in workforce investments COSWAP is able to perform 5 workforce development projects (on average) and train 70 workforce program participants, SWIFT or conservation corps members. To date, COSWAP has awarded 117 projects, where 7,037 acres have been treated and 9,470 are planned for completion by early 2028, and training hundreds of SWIFT and conservation corps members.

Beginning in FY 2023-24, COSWAP also received a 3-year Evaluation and Implementation grant from OSPB for an evaluation project on wildfire mitigation and forest management strategies, which will be complete in the current fiscal year.

45. [Rep. Brown] What is the distribution of expenditures (and projects) between the workforce development and landscape resilience parts of COSWAP? Please also provide more information on how these funds/projects (esp. landscape resilience fuel reduction projects) interact with the Natural Disaster Hazard Mitigation Enterprise within the Department of Public Safety.

Response: COSWAP has funded 88 Workforce Development projects since its inception totaling $14.6M, and 29 Landscape Resilience Investment projects totaling $25.8M. COSWAP has supported three rounds of the Workforce Development Grant and anticipates awarding approximately $7M in additional workforce development projects through the 4th round in the current fiscal year. COSWAP has supported four rounds of the Landscape Resilience Investment, including two special releases supporting watershed health in partnership with the CWCB's Wildfire Ready Watersheds Program.

The Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC) is a core member of the COSWAP Coordination Team and works closely with COSWAP staff and the Colorado State Forest Service to evaluate COSWAP programmatic criteria and investments. The majority of COSWAP projects are within the program's 10 strategic focus areas.

46. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How much federal funds are going into the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Grant Program or similar uses within the Colorado State Forest Service?

Response: Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) funds are not utilized as match for any federal funds. Match provided by award recipients for FRWRM grants from CSFS may come from federal sources, but CSFS does not track the source of applicants' matching funds, only the total amount contributed to projects.

47. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] How much money from state parks are going into wildfire mitigation? How much is specifically from the Keep Colorado Wild pass?

Response: CPW has an annual budget of $450,000, funded from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund, to provide statewide forest management and fuels mitigation at state parks, including reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires, improving forest resiliency to insects and diseases, and promoting biological diversity. This funding is often matched with federal or state grants (e.g., the Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation (FRWRM) grant program) to expand the impact of the base budget. CPW does not track expenditures directly to the specific state park pass revenue source. Keep Colorado Wild pass revenue, along with other state park revenue earned from sales of camping and other entry passes is deposited into the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund and supports the state park system as a whole, along with funding from other sources, including Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and lottery.

Cash Fund Detail

Continuously Appropriated Funds

48. [Sen. Kirkmeyer] Please provide a table of all continuously appropriated cash funds, how much of their funds originate from General Fund (by fund), and the fund balance.

Response: Please see Table 10 for details of DNR's continuously appropriated cash funds. It is important to consider that significant portions of the balances of many of these funds are subject to encumbrances, grant commitments, or similar purposes. For example, the Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund is a revolving loan fund. Approximately 53% of its fund balance listed below consists of principal and interest on active loans which will be received by CWCB over the next 30 years on average. These dollars do not equate to actual cash available in the funds. Colorado State Forest Service continually appropriated cash funds are found in the Department of Higher Education chart of accounts because they are hosted by the Colorado State University (CSU). They are provided here, as the revenue is appropriated to the CSFS cash funds through DNR's Long Bill, beginning in FY 2025-26. DNR does not have financial oversight of the funds once they are transferred to CSFS.

Table 10: Department of Natural Resources Continuously Appropriated Cash Funds

Division	Fund	Overall Fund Balance as of 6/30/2025	Fund Balance from Gen Fund as of 6/30/2025
EDO	Wildfire Mitigation Capacity Development Fund	$25,873,438	$3,240,548
ECMC	Orphaned Well Mitigation Enterprise	$31,910,230	$0
SLB	Investment and Development Fund	$6,676,964	$0
CPW	Vanpool Program Revolving Account	$7,814	$0
CPW	Backcountry Search & Rescue Fund	$6,388,444	$0
CPW	Rocky Mountain Sheep and Goat License	$4,875,247	$0
CPW	Habitat Partnership Cash Fund	$972,455	$0
CPW	DNR Lottery Distribution	$51,291,728	$0
CPW	Natural Resources Foundation Fund	$9,002,659	$0

Table 10: Department of Natural Resources Continuously Appropriated Cash Funds			
Division	**Fund**	**Overall Fund Balance as of 6/30/2025**	**Fund Balance from Gen Fund as of 6/30/2025**
CPW	Stores Revolving Fund	$4,686,555	$0
CPW	Parks & Outdoor Recreation Emergency Reserve Fund	$5,384,679	$0
CPW	Parks & Wildlife Aquatic Nuisance Species Fund	$8,104,097	$0
CPW	Climate Resilient Wildlife Cash Fund	$0	$0
CPW	Firearms Training & Safety Course Cash Fund	$0	$0
CPW	Local Access Route Cash Fund	$0	$0
CPW	Strategic Outdoor Recreation Management & Infrastructure Cash Fund	$0	$0
CWCB	Loan Foreclosure Fund	$100,000	$0
CWCB	Flood & Drought Response Fund	$454,472	$0
CWCB	Litigation Fund	$708,005	$0
CWCB	Emergency Dam Repair Cash Fund	$502,742	$0
CWCB	Feasibility Small Grant Fund	$517,253	$0
CWCB	Publications Fund	$0	$0
CWCB	Colorado Healthy Rivers Tax Checkoff	$604,921	$0
CWCB	Wild & Scenic Rivers Fund	$480,558	$0
CWCB	Loan Guarantee Fund	$0	$0
CWCB	Severance Tax Perpetual Base Fund	$589,420,703	$0
CWCB	Water Efficiency Grant Program Cash Fund	$207,378	$0
CWCB	Interbasin Compact Committee Operation Fund	$666,328	$0
CWCB	Water Supply Reserve Fund	$32,236,745	$0
Colorado State Forest Service at Colorado State University Continuously Appropriated Cash Funds			
CSFS	Forest Restoration Program Fund	$25,465,422	$25,465,422
CSFS	Healthy Forests and Vibrant Communities Fund	$11,853,676	$11,853,676

Natural Resources

FY 2026-27 Joint Budget Committee Hearing: Post-hearing Responses

Common Questions (Written-only Response)

1. Please provide a breakdown of your department's total advertising budget for the current and prior fiscal year. Specifically:

   Response: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) advertising budgets and expenditures vary by division. The Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS), Energy and Carbon Management Commission (ECMC), State Land Board (SLB), and Division of Water Resources (DWR) did not expend on advertising in FY 2024-25 and do not expect to do so in FY 2025-26, other than for the purposes of advertising job openings, rulemaking notices, or other necessary official notices in local newspapers. More detailed information for the DNR divisions engaging in advertising campaigns, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), and Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), follows.

   a. What is the total amount budgeted and expended on advertising and media placement type?

      Response: With the exception of CSFS, which is detailed in the following question, DNR divisions do not budget for nor track advertising expenditures by media placement type. Overall advertising budgets and expenditures are as follows:

Table 1: Department of Natural Resources Advertising Budget and Expenditures

Division	FY 2024-25 Actual Expenditure	FY 2025-26 Budget
Colorado Parks & Wildlife	$4,342,161	$3,781,330
Colorado Water Conservation Board	$175,000	$75,000
Colorado State Forest Service	$161,057	$10,000

b. How are those advertising dollars allocated across different media types (e.g., television (national/local/cable), radio (terrestrial vs streaming), SEM, digital (display, YouTube), connected TV, social media, print, outdoor, etc.)?

Response:
CPW: CPW's approach to allocating funding across advertising platforms varies based on the particular campaign and available budget. For larger programs, such as the Keep Colorado Wild pass and Colorado Wildlife Council marketing, CPW collaborates with contracted media partners who provide suggestions based on our goals, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and budgets to ensure the most efficient allocation of resources across various media types. During monthly meetings, or more frequently based on monitoring metrics, resource allocation adjustments are determined collaboratively with the vendor, the Wildlife Council, and/or CPW staff.

For smaller programs with lower budgets, media placement is targeted based on audience, location, and goals. Due to the limited budget available, the majority is placed with digital products, such as paid search and paid social media. This allows the message to focus narrowly with tighter demographic options more economically and with solid analytics to demonstrate results or adjust allocations.

CPW also maintains historical relationships with local media companies and other state agency publications, such as the Official State Vacation Guide (OSVG), Welcome Home (USPS movers), and 5280. Leveraging these legacy business relationships, CPW's goal is to place print advertising at the most economical pricing available.

CWCB: CWCB primarily spent advertising dollars on educational items such as flyers and other promotional products, digital and social media channels, including websites and Instagram. Additional spending is directed to investments in website design and maintenance. A small portion is allocated to Colorado Public Radio sponsorship. CWCB has also allocated advertising dollars to conduct outreach to Spanish and disproportionately impacted communities to raise awareness about the Colorado Water Plan's public comment period. This was done through a variety of channels including canvassing, tabling events, radio programming, written articles, and webinars.

CSFS: CSFS works with its vendor to determine where to apply advertising dollars to maximize effectiveness in communicating with its target audience. FY 2024-25 advertising expenditures were allocated across the following media types:

- Streaming (YouTube) – $58,712
- Public radio sponsorships – $21,607
- Rockies sponsorship – $20,000
- Cinema placements – $23,281
- Social media (Meta) – $1,067
- Paid media plan – $3,900
- Media placement fee – $22,500

c. How much of that spending is directed to Colorado-based or local media outlets? How is the media currently purchased?

Response:
CPW: CPW purchases goods and services through the state procurement process designed to ensure the procurement of quality goods and services at the best value through fair, open, and competitive processes. Programmatic advertising is purchased through digital real-time bidding services that find the most economically available advertising within provided parameters. For example, if CPW wishes to place an ad, and a locally owned newspaper has space available on their website inventory at a higher cost than placing an ad across the full national pool of online papers with open inventory in its local outlets, the ad will be placed on the national pool's sites.

All advertising and media spending for The Colorado Wildlife Council has a statutory mandate to educate Coloradans on the benefits of hunting and angling, and the Keep Colorado Wild Pass is only available on vehicles with Colorado registrations. Advertising and media spending for these two programs is targeted to Colorado audiences through vendor-managed placements.

CPW also purchases print advertising through several local outlets, including 5280 magazine, Thirst, Colorado Country Life, and the Visit Denver Summer Vacation Guide, and sponsors Red Rocks through the city of Denver. In FY 2024-26, CPW spent approximately $25,000 in advertising specifically to out-of-state residents through non-Colorado-based entities.

CWCB: A relatively small portion of CWCB's advertising spending was directed to Colorado Public Radio sponsorship for ColoradoRiver.com.

CSFS: More than 40 percent of CSFS's FY 2024-25 advertising spending was directed to local outlets. All of the division's advertising was purchased through a marketing firm, except for social media ads, which the division purchased directly.

d. What performance metrics or evaluation tools does the department use to measure the effectiveness of these advertising campaigns? What are the goals of the campaigns, and what key performance indicators are measured for success?

Response:
CPW: CPW employs a range of methods to assess the effectiveness of its advertising and marketing campaigns. For the Colorado Wildlife Council, the goal is to promote education and awareness about the benefits of hunting and angling. CPW uses reporting, surveys, and the quantity of newsletter signups to measure effectiveness. For the Keep Colorado Wild Pass advertising campaign, the goal is to increase sales of the pass and awareness of its benefits. Effectiveness is measured through reports provided by the vendor, including impressions, video completions, audio completions, and other key performance indicators, which all outpaced targets across all categories. For other advertising efforts, goals vary by campaign; for example, officer recruitment efforts are measured by the number of applications. Other measurement tools include the number of app downloads, earned media, website referrals, and clicks, all of which are determined by campaign and media type.

CWCB: The CWCB measures effectiveness by tracking website traffic and engagement, social media reach and interaction, attendance at Basin Roundtables and public meetings, and feedback from stakeholders. The goals of the campaigns are to increase public awareness of the Colorado Water Plan and ColoradoRiver.com, encourage participation in Basin Roundtables, and educate stakeholders about loan programs and water resource initiatives. Key performance indicators include unique website visitors, time spent on pages, social media impressions and engagement rates, and participation levels in public meetings.

CSFS: The goal of the Live Wildfire Ready campaign is to raise public awareness around ways to mitigate risks of the potential impacts of wildfires on homes and neighborhoods, particularly in the wildland-urban interface. CSFS staff track impressions with the public to measure campaign effectiveness. The Live Wildfire Ready campaign garnered

9,470,244 impressions across all tools tracked in 2025, as of December 8.

e. If any portion of advertising is managed through third-party vendors (or 'partners';) or media buying firms, please provide any available data or reporting from those companies on campaign performance and spending. How often do the departments discuss media placements with these vendors?

Response:
CPW: CPW receives reports and discusses media placement with vendors through regularly scheduled meetings, frequent check-ins, and reporting, with results provided at campaign completion for smaller, targeted campaigns. Recent reports are linked below:

- FY26 Q1 Colorado Wildlife Council Recap Report
- FY25 Keep Colorado Wild Recap Report
- FY25 Eldorado Canyon report
- FY25 ANS Campaign report
- FY26 Recruitment Campaign report

CWCB: When any portion of advertising is managed through third-party vendors, the vendors provide performance data insight such as impressions and reach. Media placements are discussed with these vendors on a regular basis to ensure alignment with outreach goals. As an example, CPR provides a dashboard that displays real-time data on page views, session duration, and other information. The table below shows CPR-provided data for the period from August 19, 2025 to December 23, 2025.

Table 2: CWCB ColoradoRiver.com Engagement Data	
August 19, 2025 - December 23, 2025	
Number of Visitors	3,664
Number of Page Views	9,054
Number of Sessions	5,286
Page Views per Session	1.71
Average Session Duration	6:10

This kind of data shows the impact of events like Governor Polis' introduction of ColoradoRiver.com in August 2025 and of certain promotional activities like highlights in CPR's monthly newsletter. Reports show site-wide data and page-specific information as well. The figure below shows more detailed engagement information for individual pages.

CSFS: CSFS engaged a marketing firm to help manage its Live Wildfire Ready advertising campaign. The campaign garnered 9,470,244 impressions across all tools tracked in calendar year 2025, and more than 27.5 million impressions across all tools tracked since its launch in May 2023.

Table 3: CSFS Live Wildfire Ready Media Impressions		
January 1, 2025 - December 8, 2025		
Media Type	**Impressions**	**Notes**
Website	14,103	3 campaign webpages
Streaming	3,964,658	YouTube in 9 counties with high wildfire risk
Cinema	1,549,930	Movie theaters in 9 counties with high wildfire risk
Radio sponsorships	2,833,336	CPR and KUNC/KJAC on-air spots, digital ads on CPR.org
Rockies	775,000	28 home games at Coors Field
Social media ads	299,149	3 Ads: 2 Facebook, 1 Instagram
Social media posts	34,068	25 posts: 18 Facebook, 3 Instagram, 4 LinkedIn
Total	**9,470,244**	

f. Monthly or quarterly reporting - how is reporting delivered?

Response:
CPW: Reporting is delivered monthly for the two largest campaigns, Colorado Wildlife Council and Keep Colorado Wild. For other advertising efforts, CPW receives reports at various intervals.

CWCB: Reporting is typically delivered in written form, often as PDFs or dashboards, and is reviewed regularly during outreach and communications meetings.

CSFS: CSFS receives reports from its vendor upon completion of each advertising campaign. These campaigns have historically run on an annual basis.

2. Can you please outline a detailed plan for shifting 5.0 percent of General Fund salaries to cash and/or federal fund sources. Please include the following information:

   a. A list of positions and associated funding that can be shifted to cash/federal fund sources without any action from the General Assembly.

   b. A list of positions and associated funding that can be shifted to cash/federal fund sources but would require legislation to do so.

      Response: State agencies are already incentivized to maximize non-GF fund splits for all positions. Where costs can be billed directly to a non-General Fund source, the department is already billing those fund sources. If an agency cannot bill a fund source directly for general support and administration (e.g. accounting, budgeting, leadership positions), costs are billed through indirect cost plans (internal or statewide). In many instances, the indirect cost model is the most efficient way to recover these expenses. Finally, state agencies must be able to draw a line between the work that individual positions execute and the funds that support that activity - the executive branch cannot just choose to fund an employee with federal funds or cash funds based on desire. There must be a business reason.

   What other changes could be made – programmatic or otherwise – that would allow your department greater flexibility to use cash/federal fund sources in place of General Fund for employee salaries?

   Response: DNR is not aware of other programmatic or statutory efforts that will provide greater flexibility with the use of alternative funding without significant changes to the purposes of current cash funds and the associated fee structures that would not significantly increase annual TABOR revenues.

3. How many hires have been made between the August 27, 2025 hiring freeze executive order and the end of December 2025? Why were these positions hired (e.g., because the position was posted beforehand; an exemption, etc.)? Please provide job classification, division, and fund source (General Fund vs. other funds) for each position hired.

   Response: DNR filled 174 positions during the August 27, 2025 hiring freeze. Of this number:

   - 131 positions were exempt due to the TABOR enterprise exemption as they were for Colorado Parks and Wildlife staffing;
   - 40 positions were exempt because they were posted prior to the August

27, 2025 hiring freeze;

- 2 positions were granted waivers through the Executive Branch exception process; and
- 1 position was exempt as it was a reallocation of an existing position.

Details follow in Table 4.

Table 4: Department of Natural Resources Positions Hired			
August 27, 2025 - December 31, 2025			
Division	**Job Classification**	**Rationale**	**Fund Source**
EDO	SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	RF
EDO	SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE	Exception Process	RF
EDO	AUDITOR III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	RF
EDO	STATE SERV PROF TRAIN II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	RF
EDO	POLICY ADVISOR VI	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	RF
EDO	POLICY ADVISOR VI	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	RF
EDO	ACCOUNTANT II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
EDO	PURCHASING AGENT III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CAIC	MKTG & COMM SPEC IV	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
SLB	CONTRACT ADMINISTRATOR VI	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
SLB	REAL ESTATE SPEC VI	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CWCB	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CWCB	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CWCB	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CWCB	CONTRACT ADMINISTRATOR II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
CWCB	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
DWR	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER I	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER IV	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER II	Exception Process	GF
DWR	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH I	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
DWR	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	GF
ECMC	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF

Table 4: Department of Natural Resources Positions Hired			
August 27, 2025 - December 31, 2025			
Division	**Job Classification**	**Rationale**	**Fund Source**
ECMC	PROGRAM ASSISTANT I	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PROGRAM ASSISTANT II	Employee Reallocation - Exempt	CF
ECMC	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	TRAINING SPECIALIST IV	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT I	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PROJECT MANAGER III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PROGRAM ASSISTANT I	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	PHY SCI RES/SCIENTIST III	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
ECMC	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF
DRMS	BUDGET & POLICY ANLST IV	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF/FF
DRMS	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF/FF
DRMS	ENVIRON PROTECT SPEC II	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF/FF
DRMS	ENVIRON PROTECT INTERN	Posted prior to Hiring Freeze	CF/FF
CPW	SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PARK MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PARK MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PARK MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	ADMINISTRATOR V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER VI	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER II	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	ADMIN ASSISTANT III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM ASSISTANT II	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	ENGR/PHYS SCI TECH I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER I	TABOR Exempt	CF

Table 4: Department of Natural Resources Positions Hired			
August 27, 2025 - December 31, 2025			
Division	**Job Classification**	**Rationale**	**Fund Source**
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	ADMIN ASSISTANT III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	CONTRACT ADMIN III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROJECT MANAGER III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TECHNICIAN IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR III	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	ARTS PROFESSIONAL II	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER II	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER V	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROJECT MANAGER II	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TRAINING SPECIALIST IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM ASSISTANT I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PARK MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	WILDLIFE MANAGER IV	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	PROGRAM MANAGEMENT I	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF

Table 4: Department of Natural Resources Positions Hired			
August 27, 2025 - December 31, 2025			
Division	Job Classification	Rationale	Fund Source
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF

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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
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CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF
CPW	TEMPORARY AIDE	TABOR Exempt	CF