

# DNR Update: Colorado Association of Ski Towns

March 12, 2026  
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Colorado Department of Natural Resources

# Topics

- About the Department of Natural Resources
- Colorado River
- Drought
- Wildfire
- Ponderosa Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force
- Colorado Outdoors Strategy
- Colorado Outdoor Opportunities Act (HB26-1008)
- Wolverine Restoration
- Shared Stewardship

# About DNR

- The mission of the Department of Natural Resources is to manage and conserve Colorado's natural resources for the benefit of people today and tomorrow.
- DNR has eight divisions that manage water, land, wildlife, minerals, energy resources and outdoor recreation of the state.
- In Fiscal Year 2026, the Department has an annual budget of about \$530.9M, 1,805.4 FTE, 1,100 + temporary employees, and 4,000+ volunteers.

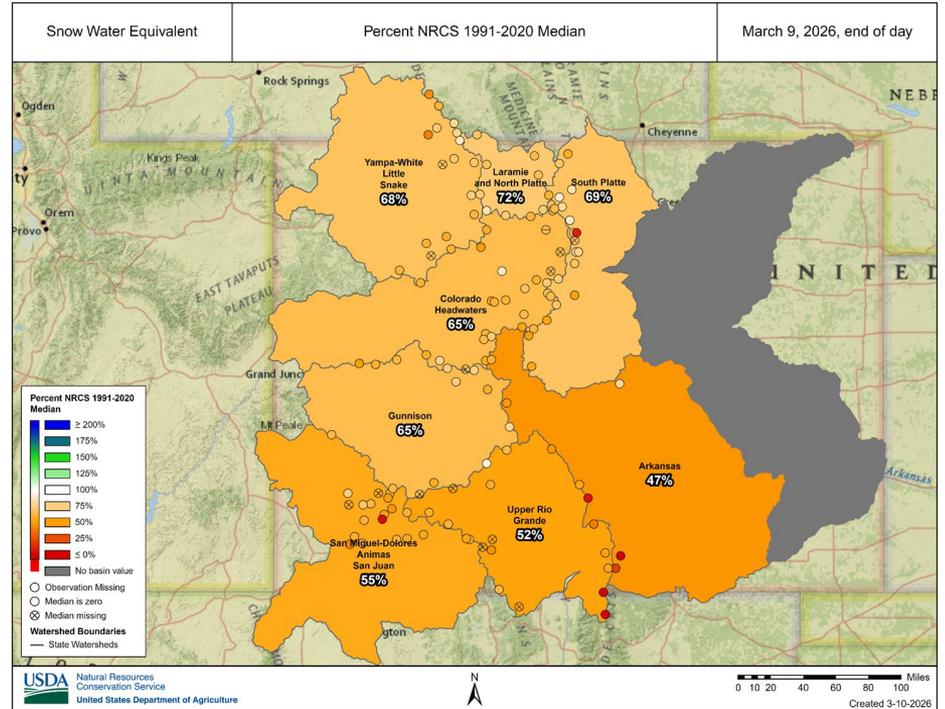
# Colorado River

- Current operating guidelines for Lakes Powell and Mead expire at the end of 2026.
- Colorado has been engaged in discussions with the other basin states with the goal of adopting a consensus framework for post-2026 operating guidelines.
- The Bureau of Reclamation is conducting a NEPA analysis of future potential operating guidelines.
- Colorado submitted comments on March 2nd on Reclamation's draft Environmental Impact Statement.



# Drought

- March 2026 snowpack 63% of average
- Second lowest snow water equivalent volume in the past 46 years
- Peak snowpack usually April 1 and Colorado is unlikely to catch up to average
- 38 counties are experiencing at least D2 conditions (severe drought)

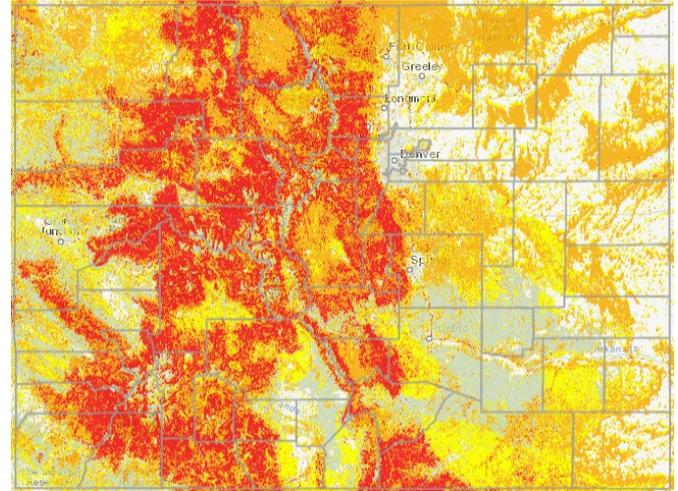


# Expected Impacts and Actions Around Drought

- Likely Activation of Colorado Drought Task Force
- Work with federal/state entities on drought assistance
- Expect record low runoff and river levels
- Potential Recreation and Municipal Water Restrictions
- Anticipating difficult wildfire season
- We all can help by monitoring our water use and extra vigilance to prevent start of wildfires

# Wildfire

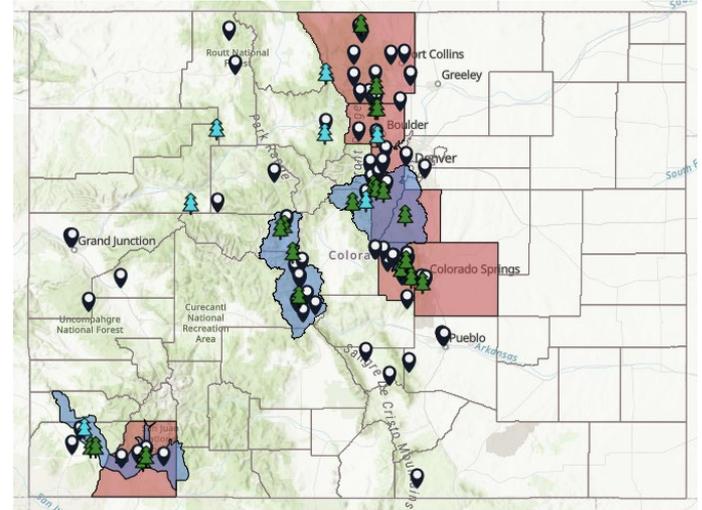
- Colorado experiences a year-round wildfire season.
- State wildfire programs:
  - Planning: CWCB's Wildfire Ready Watersheds
  - Mitigation: DNR's Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program & CSFS's Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program
  - Response: Division of Fire Prevention and Control



Fire intensity map of Colorado from the CSFS Wildfire Risk Viewer

# Wildfire Risk Reduction

- Forest Restoration and Wildfire Risk Mitigation Program
  - Now annually funded at \$8M
  - \$42.5 million invested since 2017
- Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program
  - \$47.5 million invested since 2022
  - Partnerships with conservation corps and DOC highlight workforce priorities



Map of COSWAP wildfire mitigation projects

# Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force

- The Ponderosa Mountain Pine Beetle Task Force created by the Governor by [Executive Order B 2025 001](#) in response to a significant and expanding mountain pine beetle outbreak affecting ponderosa pine forests along Colorado's Front Range.
- The Task Force is charged with developing coordinated, science-based strategies to protect Colorado's forests, communities, critical infrastructure, and water resources over the next decade.
- Website: <https://dnr.colorado.gov/ponderosa-mountain-pine-beetle-task-force>



# Colorado's Outdoors Strategy



# Colorado Outdoor Opportunities Act

Second Regular Session  
Seventy-fifth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

**INTRODUCED**

LLS NO. 26-0502.01 Clare Haffner x6137

**HOUSE BILL 26-1008**

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**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Lukens and Taggart,**

**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Marchman and Rich,**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

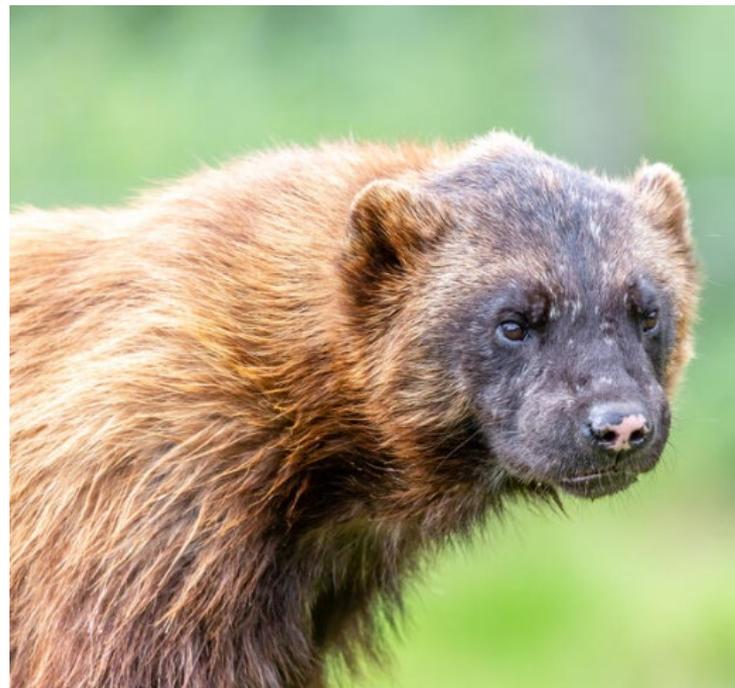
101      **CONCERNING MEASURES TO ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION**  
102              **OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STATE, AND, IN CONNECTION**  
103              **THEREWITH, EXPANDING THE DIVISION OF PARKS AND**  
104              **WILDLIFE'S CAPACITY FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION**  
105              **COORDINATION, PLANNING, AND MANAGEMENT.**

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# Wolverine Restoration

- Bipartisan passage of SB24-171 will facilitate restoration of wolverines in Colorado (supported by CO Ski Country and Vail).
- Wolverine Restoration Plan finalized January 2026.
- Restoration is contingent upon finalization of 10(j) rule by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).



# Shared Stewardship

- To address the multitude of challenges impacting public lands, DNR has Shared Stewardship MOUs with the USDA and BLM.
- Agencies working together to:
  - build wildfire resilient watersheds
  - enhance forest health, rangelands and wildlife populations
  - provide for robust recreational opportunities
  - protect communities in the wildland-urban interface
- MOUs establish a Shared Stewardship Strategy to improve collaboration between stakeholders based on shared priorities.

# Questions?