



**COLORADO**

Department of  
Natural Resources

## Colorado Department of Natural Resources (DNR) - Strategic Priorities

DNR's mission is to *develop, preserve, and enhance the state's natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations*. That mission is becoming more challenging yet more critical under the pressures of population growth, habitat loss, and climate change.

As Colorado nears its 150th year of statehood, DNR recognizes the need to respond strategically to these natural resources challenges if Coloradans are to survive and thrive here in the next 150-years. DNR recognizes that since time immemorial, the land currently known as Colorado has been the original homelands of Indigenous people. The natural and cultural resources of Colorado have long been co-stewarded by many Tribal Nations and DNR cannot achieve its mission without those Tribal partnerships.

The urgency of this mission led DNR's Executive Director's Office to identify five strategic priorities - advance biodiversity, balance conservation and recreation, facilitate the energy transition, enhance tribal engagement, and strengthen climate resilience - that transcend yet tie together the work performed across DNR's divisions, state government, and our partners.

### **Advance Biodiversity**

- *Problem Statement:* Worldwide, it is estimated that more than 1 million plants, animals and other living things are facing the threat of extinction. Irresponsible development, proliferation of invasive species, climate change and growing disturbance of critical wildlife habitat are leading cases of biodiversity loss in Colorado and beyond.
- *Strategic Priority:* *Protect, conserve and restore Colorado's native species and ecosystems to combat the loss of biodiversity in our state.*

### **Balance Conservation and Recreation**

- *Problem Statement:* Demand for recreation in Colorado has grown exponentially in recent years, putting unprecedented strains on our natural resources. When recreational use is improperly or irresponsibly planned and managed, it can take a toll on the clean waters, quality fish and wildlife habitat and intact landscapes that

Coloradans value.

- *Strategic Priority:* Prioritize the conservation of the state's wildlife, landscapes and agricultural lands while enhancing public access or management in areas most suitable for meeting recreation demand.

### **Facilitate the Energy Transition**

- *Problem Statement:* The General Assembly has adopted a goal to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution 50% by 2030 and 100% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels in order to support the global effort to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Colorado's updated GHG Pollution Reduction Roadmap identified a number of actions necessary to meet those goals, including transitioning to renewable electricity, reducing methane pollution from oil and gas development, developing regulatory frameworks for carbon management, and other actions to reduce GHG emissions. DNR's Divisions will have a role in supporting this transition (e.g., by expanding renewable electricity generation on state lands, etc.) and in managing the impacts of this transition (e.g., impacts to wildlife, changes in revenue generation, etc.)
- *Strategic Priority:* Plan for a coordinated, strategic approach to support the transition to zero-emission energy while avoiding, minimizing or mitigating the impacts on species and habitats, and identifying and managing fiscal impacts. Implement State's GHG Reduction Roadmap and DNR Energy Goals while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from DNR's operations.

### **Enhance Tribal Engagement**

- *Problem Statement:* For hundreds of years, Tribal Nations and communities have endured significant detrimental impacts across generations from colonization through the development of formal Federal Indian law and policy. This includes forced removal, the failure to honor treaties and other legal agreements, and various initiatives that have actively limited Native American sovereignty and rights while damaging everything from cultural practices to economic prospects. We must recognize both how historical state actions have contributed to this and the resiliency of Native communities that have still passed down traditional knowledge, oral histories, and languages to maintain the cultural and spiritual connections that Native communities have with the land and ecosystems.
- *Strategic Priority:* Through the development of a Tribal Relations Program,

cooperatively build capacity and further cultural understanding within and across DNR for consistent, meaningful, and sustainable Tribal government-to-government and greater Native/Indigenous community engagement, with a goal of facilitating lasting working partnerships.

### **Strengthen Climate Resilience**

- *Problem Statement:* Colorado's climate has warmed by +2.3°F since 1980 and is projected to warm by up to 5.5°F by 2050. These statistics are staggering, the effects of which permeate every aspect of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources' mission *to develop, preserve, and enhance the state's natural resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations*. Catastrophic wildfires, extraordinary floods, and multi-year droughts have depleted water supplies, threatened communities and livelihoods, and accelerated the loss of biodiversity in Colorado.
- *Strategic Priority:* Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity of Colorado's natural resources to climate-related disasters by aligning and advancing DNR's actions with statewide energy and climate goals.