

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States: A Comparative Analysis Focused on State Agencies, Policies, Programs, and Resources

Casey Trout (casey.trout@usu.edu) & Jordan W. Smith (jordan.smith@usu.edu)

Institute of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism

S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources

Utah State University

Draft current as of: March 19, 2023

Funding Acknowledgement

This report was prepared as part of the planning and analysis work to inform the development of Utah's Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan. Funding was provided by the Utah State Legislature via the Utah Outdoor Adventure Commission and the Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	2
<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Methods</i>	3
Data Collection	3
<i>Findings</i>	4
State Characteristics	4
State Budgets	5
Economic Contributions of Outdoor Recreation	6
Outdoor Recreation Management & Education	8
State Recreation Agencies & Programs.....	8
Tourism Offices & Responsible Recreation Messaging.....	10
Collaboration Within and Among State and Federal Entities	11
Education Requirements and Initiatives	12
Recreation Fees.....	13
State Park Systems	15
Managed Assets.....	15
Fees and Visitation	15
Revenue Sources.....	16
Funding for Outdoor Recreation Efforts	17
State Planning Assistance	18
Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs	19
Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Programs.....	21
<i>Conclusion</i>	21
<i>References</i>	23

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Executive Summary

Outdoor recreation is an invaluable part of the Western lifestyle. State governments in the contiguous western U.S. (Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) are increasing investment in outdoor recreation within their state borders to ensure continued and expanded access to outdoor recreation opportunities and to enhance the outdoor recreation economy in their states. This report provides an objective inventory and comparison of how states across the Western U.S. fund, manage, and support outdoor recreation. Based on findings across the states, we provide recommendations tailored to state legislatures and state government entities regarding how outdoor recreation management may be improved and how additional funding could be generated to support outdoor recreation opportunities.

Standard across the western states are the existence of state park agencies, tourism offices, off-highway vehicle programs, and boating programs. Beginning in 2013, Utah opened the first Office of Outdoor Recreation in the nation. Today, seven of the eleven western states have followed Utah's lead and opened similar offices. However, there appears to be little coordination and collaboration across state entities that manage or support outdoor recreation. Statutory bodies, like Utah's Outdoor Adventure Commission, are a step in the right direction to provide formal mechanisms for collaboration and ensure efficient use of state resources. Research outside of the context of outdoor recreation suggests these statutory bodies are most successful when they have a formal mandate, discretionary authority to guide certain aspects of their member agencies' actions, and control over state resources that benefit their member agencies.

Collaboration between state entities and federal land management agencies similarly appears to be uncommon, occurring in an ad-hoc manner. Integrating federal agency leadership into statutory bodies that provide formal mechanisms for collaboration would help to align state-led policy and state-funded projects with federal policy and project priorities. Federal partners can serve in ex-officio and non-voting capacities on state commissions to serve this purpose. Previous research suggests building formal mechanisms for collaboration between state entities and federal land management agencies can help align state and federal management priorities in outdoor recreation management.

There are notable differences in the manner by which state governments fund outdoor recreation efforts. If there is an additional need for funding for specific programs, states may consider adding user-specific fees. For example, RV registration fees fund a Recreation Vehicle fund in Idaho to develop RV facilities in the state. Similarly, OHV registration and/or sticker fees support off-highway vehicle grants in each of the western states. Other avenues of increasing revenue for state programs include: charging differential entrance fees to state parks for non-residents (Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming), diverting sales tax to support outdoor recreation infrastructure grant programs (Utah), and diverting lottery funds to support outdoor recreation grant programs (Oregon and Washington).

The policy and administrative recommendations above are only a few that have broad applicability across the West. There are numerous other recommendations focused on specific state programs and policies throughout the report. While this report is by no means a comprehensive inventory of how the western states fund, manage, and support outdoor recreation, it provides a solid starting point for state governments and legislatures to compare outdoor recreation management in their state with that of other western states and spark discussion of ideas to improve outdoor recreation opportunities.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Introduction

The continental western US is known for its stunning landscapes, large swaths of federal public lands, and diverse outdoor recreational opportunities. In recent years, the value of outdoor recreation in this region has become increasingly recognized for its economic benefits and improvements to residents' and visitors' quality of life and wellbeing. Additionally, the programs that state governments have created and manage to support outdoor recreation opportunities vary across the region.

The purpose of this report is to provide an objective comparison of how states across the Western U.S. fund, manage, and support outdoor recreation. We specifically focus on state agencies, policies, programs, and resources given our intent is to inform the policy discussions and decisions of state agency staff and elected officials. Our analysis focuses exclusively on the 11 Western states in the contiguous U.S., as the states' role in providing and managing outdoor recreation in the region is unique relative to other states with smaller proportions of outdoor recreation resources under federal management. The analysis relies on both secondary data, which could be accessed through public databases, reports, or websites, and, more notably, an extensive compilation of data on state agencies, policies, programs, and resources. The resulting data, to our knowledge, is the most comprehensive and current resource on outdoor recreation focused on state agencies, policies, programs, and resources. Our analyses of these data are primarily descriptive and comparative, with the intent being to understand how individual states differ from one another and to point state agency leads and elected officials towards points of differentiation that could be the focus of new or refined outdoor management policies, programs, and administrative structures.

We first present a simple comparative overview of how the western states differ in their populations, land management, and budgets. These introductory data "set the stage," providing the necessary context to understand how and why outdoor recreation policies, programs, and administrative structures differ across the states. Subsequent sections of the report take a more focused look at different aspects of outdoor recreation. Specifically, we detail:

- The economic contributions of outdoor recreation to the states' economies.
- How outdoor recreation is managed by state agencies.
- The use fees for engaging in outdoor recreation.
- Differences in the funding and management of state park systems.
- State funding for investments in outdoor recreation infrastructure and management.

Methods

Data Collection

Data were collected through internet searches of public databases, reports, and websites. The selection of which data to include in the comparative analysis depended upon several key factors:

- 1) The data had to be relevant to outdoor recreation administration and management through state agencies, policies, or programs.
- 2) The data had to be available for all 11 western states.
- 3) The data had to be produced or managed by a state or federal agency or by a national coordinating association for public administration (e.g., the National Association of State Park Directors). We excluded data that were compiled by user-groups or advocacy-organizations.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

- 4) Data that was available in a consolidated format was preferred to data not available in a consolidated format. For example, information on the outdoor recreation economy in each state was obtained from the Bureau of Economic Analysis instead of ad-hoc state-level economic analyses. Also, information on assets managed by each state's park system was taken from the 2019-2020 Statistical Report of State Park Operations produced by the National Association of State Park Directors (Leung, Cheung, & Smith, 2022) as opposed to individual agency reports.

Data for each of these topic areas is noted on the supplementary *comparison spreadsheet* available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13swer4TbHRY7M562GILsUNKN7xIspgofHHx4M4ZnIZk/edit?usp=sharing>

Findings

State Characteristics

California stands out as having a population over five times greater than each of the other western states (Figure 1). The remaining ten western states each have a population less than 8 million. In fact, the combined population of the other ten western states is approximately 37.5 million, which is less than California's population of 39 million. Wyoming is the state with the smallest population, with just under 600,000 residents.

There is a large amount of variability in the size of states across the region. California and Montana are the largest states in the region. Both are approximately twice as large as the smallest state in the region, Washington.

The proportion of state-owned land in each state varies widely across the region, with just 0.3% of land within the state borders owned by the state government in Nevada, while almost 12% of the land in Arizona is owned by the state.

The western states are unique in that each of the states have a relatively large proportion of federal lands within their state borders. However, there is still a wide range in the proportion of land owned by the federal government, with Nevada having by far the greatest proportion with 84% of land within the state borders under federal ownership. Utah and Idaho both have roughly two-thirds of land within the state borders under federal ownership, while Washington and Montana have about 30% under federal ownership.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

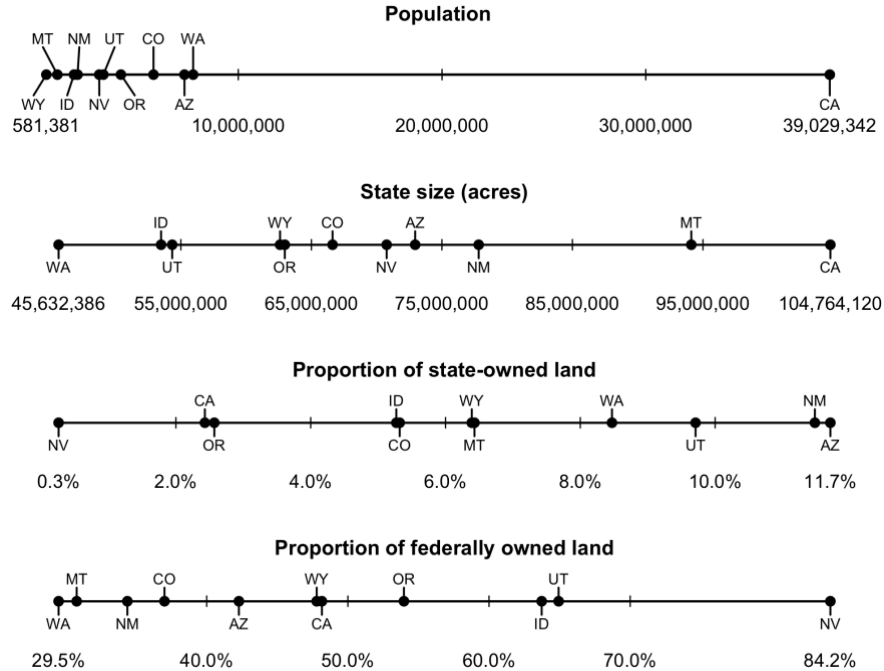


Figure 1. General characteristics of states in the western United States. Population is from U.S. Census Bureau July 1, 2022 estimates (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/geo/chart/US/PST045222>). State size, proportion of state-owned land, and proportion of federally owned land in each state is taken from the USGS Gap Analysis Project Protected Areas Statistics Dashboard (<https://www.usgs.gov/programs/gap-analysis-project/science/pad-us-statistics-dashboard>).

State Budgets

Given California’s large population, it is by far the state with the greatest amount of state government expenditures (Figure 2). Similarly, Wyoming, as the smallest state in the region, has the least expenditures. However, when comparing expenditures per capita, Wyoming has the greatest expenditures per capita. Wyoming’s expenditures per capita are almost double those of the state with the smallest expenditures per capita, Idaho. California still has fairly large expenditures per capita as compared to the other states in the region, with the second highest expenditures per capita at \$14,000 in 2020.

Similarly attributable to its large population, California’s state park agency has the greatest operating budget in the region. The state park agency operating budget in California is over six times larger than that of Colorado and over 65 times larger than that of Wyoming. However, the operating budget of Colorado’s state park agency is the largest when considering operating budgets relative to the total state budget. The proportion of the state operating budget going to the state park agency’s operating budget in Colorado is over two times greater than that of the state with the smallest proportion, Nevada.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

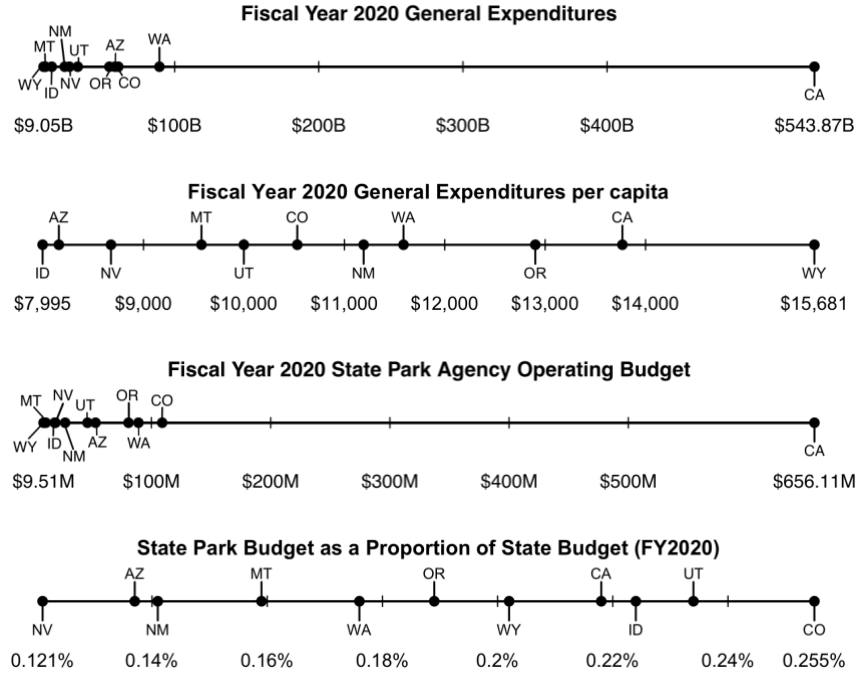


Figure 2. Characteristics of state government budgets. State government general expenditures and general expenditures per capita are from the Urban Institute’s compilation of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances (<https://state-local-finance-data.taxpolicycenter.org/>). Note that general expenditures include all state and political subdivisions of the state (county, local government) expenditures. State Park Agency operating budgets and operating budgets as a proportion of the state’s budget are from the National Association of State Park Directors 2019-2020 Statistical Report of State Park Operations (Leung, Cheung, & Smith, 2022).

Economic Contributions of Outdoor Recreation

Although not a surprise due to its large population, California’s recreation economy has the largest GDP in the region (Figure 3). Similarly, Wyoming, with the smallest population, has the smallest GDP. However, when comparing the portion of the state’s GDP attributable to the outdoor recreation economy, California has the smallest proportion of its statewide GDP attributable to the recreation economy. On the other hand, Wyoming has the second highest proportion in the region with 3.6% of the state’s total GDP attributable to the recreation economy. Montana has the largest proportion of its economy attributable to outdoor recreation-related activity (4.4% of GDP).

Considering employment in the recreation economy, California has the greatest total number of jobs (517,238), though the smallest proportion of the state’s total employment in the recreation economy (2.9%). Wyoming and Montana have the smallest total number of jobs (15,285 and 27,584, respectively), but the greatest proportion of employment in the recreation economy (5.4%).

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

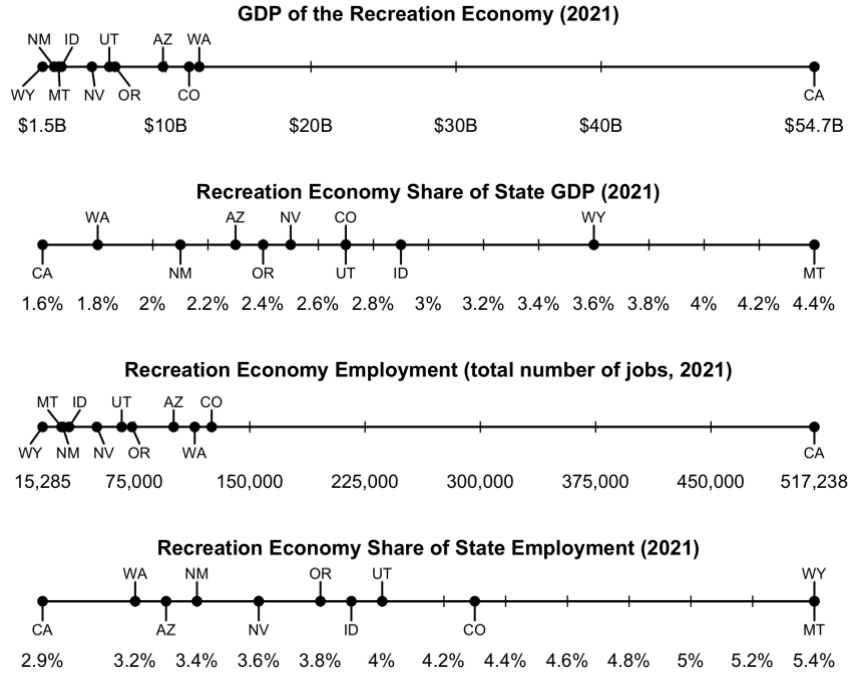


Figure 3. Recreation economy statistics for the western United States. Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis’s 2021 Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account state summary sheets (<https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>).

When evaluating the specific recreational activities that contribute the most to the states’ outdoor recreation economy, snow-based activities are the greatest contributor in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. RVing is the greatest contributor in Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon. Boating/fishing contributes the most in California, Montana, and Wyoming (Figure 4).

When evaluating the GDP of each of these activities across all of the states in this region¹, boating/fishing has the greatest total GDP at \$5.37B. This is closely followed by RVing at \$5.36B. Snow activities are valued at \$3.03B, hunting/shooting/trapping at \$2.20B, motorcycling/ATVing at \$1.73B, climbing/hiking/tent camping at \$1.41B, equestrian at \$1.40B, bicycling at \$0.98B, and recreational flying at \$0.24B.

¹ These numbers are calculated by summing the GDP contribution of each of the activities across all states in the region as they are presented on the Bureau of Economic Analysis’s 2021 Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account state summary sheets (<https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>).

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Proportional Contribution of Recreation Activities to the Statewide Recreation Economy GDP

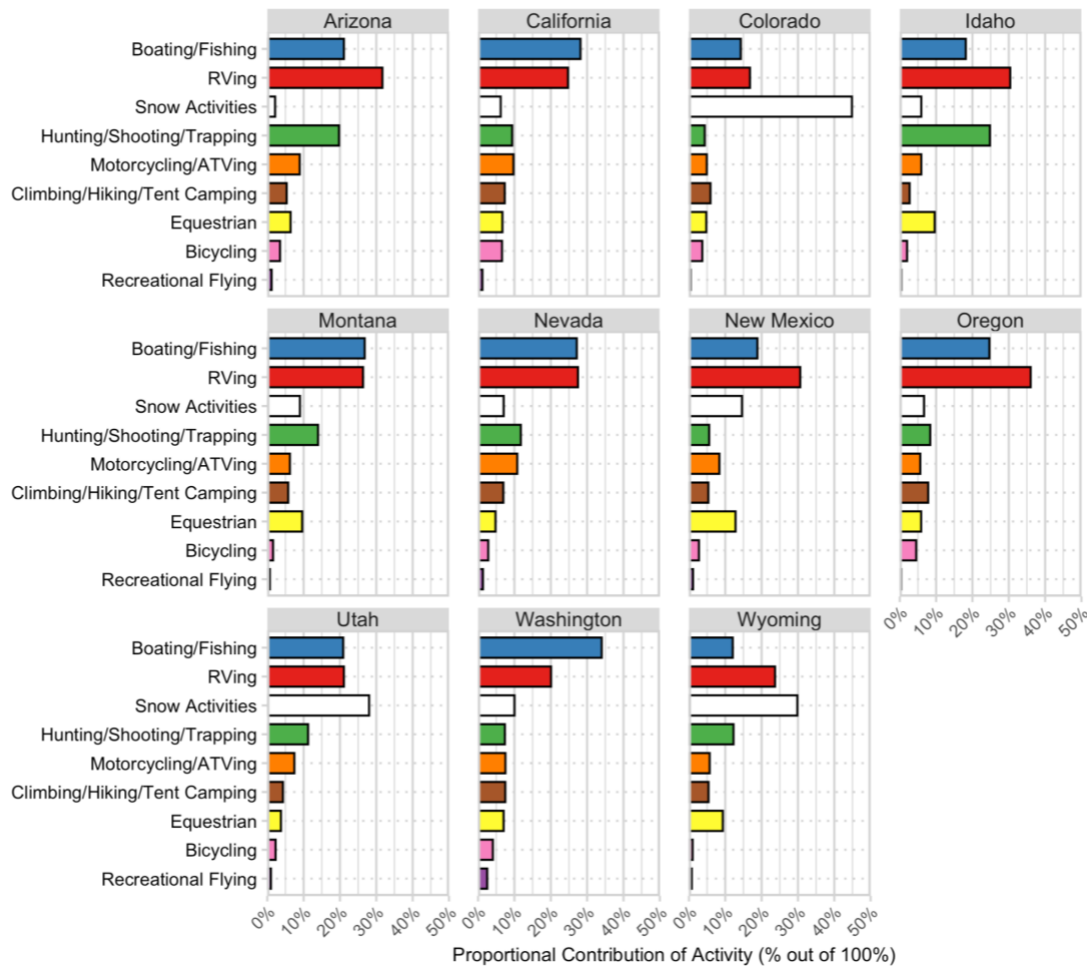


Figure 4. Proportional contribution of recreation activities to each state’s recreation economy GDP. Data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis’s 2021 Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account state summary sheets (<https://www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation>). The recreation activities are sorted from the largest total GDP contributor in the region to the smallest contributor (e.g., boating/fishing has the greatest GDP contribution across the entire region at \$5.37B, while recreational flying has the smallest contribution at \$0.24B). Note that the Bureau of Economic Analysis does not provide GDP contribution estimates for all activities; the proportional contribution of the recreational activities shown here add up to 100%, thus the proportional GDP contribution of other activities not individually estimated are not included here.

Outdoor Recreation Management & Education

State Recreation Agencies & Programs

Every state has a state park system and managing agency (Table 1). However, in some states the state park managing entity is administratively located within the same agency as the state’s wildlife management entity (e.g., Colorado Parks & Wildlife), and in some states it is an entirely independent agency (e.g., Utah State Parks). In most states the entity managing the state park system is independent (not administratively located under another entity).

Comparatively, not all states in the region have an office or division of outdoor recreation, though most do (seven out of the eleven states; Table 1). State offices and divisions of outdoor recreation are a relatively new concept, with Utah establishing the first office of outdoor recreation in 2013. The focus of each of these offices or divisions of outdoor recreation has been broadly categorized as “industry first”, wherein the office prioritizes economic development opportunities associated with outdoor recreation;

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

“industry and” where economic development and other benefits of outdoor recreation are equally valued; and “industry after” where offices manage and promote outdoor recreation for primarily non-economic benefits, but where economic benefits are expected to occur as a secondary outcome (Sausser et al., 2019). While the primary focus of each of the offices as being primarily economically-outcomes driven as opposed to driven by non-economic outcomes (e.g., increasing access or public health benefits) has changed as the offices have evolved over time, this dichotomy has remained.

The administrative location of these offices or divisions of outdoor recreation provides some insight into the primary focus of the offices, with two states housing their offices in the state’s economic development entity (Colorado and New Mexico). In Washington, the Recreation & Conservation Office is an independent agency. The other states house their offices in the state’s conservation or recreation agency. However, the administrative location of the office is not always a clear indicator of its primary focus, as the Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Office was identified as having an “Industry first” focus (Sausser et al., 2019), though it is managed within the state park agency.

Table 1
State park agencies and offices or divisions of outdoor recreation and their administrative location.

State	State Park Agency	Is it an independent agency?	Office or Division of Outdoor Recreation	Administrative Location
AZ	<u>Arizona State Parks & Trails</u>	Yes	-	-
CA	<u>California Department of Parks and Recreation</u>	Yes	-	-
CO	<u>Colorado Parks & Wildlife</u>	Yes	<u>Outdoor Recreation Industry Office</u>	Office of Economic Development & International Trade
ID	<u>Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation</u>	Yes	-	-
MT	<u>Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks</u>	Yes	-	-
NV	<u>Nevada State Parks</u>	No (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources)	<u>Division of Outdoor Recreation</u>	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
NM	<u>Division of State Parks</u>	No (Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department)	<u>Outdoor Recreation Division</u>	Economic Development Department
OR	<u>Oregon Parks and Recreation Department</u>	Yes	<u>Office of Outdoor Recreation</u>	Parks and Recreation Department
UT	<u>Utah State Parks</u>	No (Department of Natural Resources)	<u>Division of Outdoor Recreation</u>	Department of Natural Resources
WA	<u>Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission</u>	Yes	<u>Recreation & Conservation Office</u>	N/A (Independent agency)
WY	<u>Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites, & Trails</u>	Yes	<u>Outdoor Recreation Office</u>	State Parks, Historic Sites, & Trails

Every state in the region also has some form of a boating and OHV management program (Table 2), though the OHV programs generally appear to be more well-established. The administrative entity managing these programs varies by state; in some states, it is the wildlife management agency (e.g., Arizona Game & Fish), while in other states it is the state park management agency (e.g., Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation). Utah is unique in that the state’s Division of Outdoor Recreation is the managing entity of the boating and OHV programs, though this is a recent administrative change. In 2022, Utah’s Office of Outdoor Recreation was moved out of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development and changed to a formal Division of Outdoor Recreation housed in the Utah Department of Natural Resources. With this administrative change, the purview of the Division of Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

changed notably to include managing the state’s boating and OHV programs, as well as adding additional staff members to support statewide and local planning efforts and grants disbursement.

Table 2
Boating and OHV programs in each state and their managing entities.

State	Boating Program	Managing Administrative Entity	OHV Program	Managing Administrative Entity
AZ	<u>Boating</u>	Arizona Game & Fish	<u>OHV</u>	Arizona Game & Fish
CA	<u>Division of Boating and Waterways</u>	California State Parks	<u>Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division</u>	California State Parks
CO	<u>Boating Program</u>	Colorado Parks & Wildlife	<u>Off-Highway Vehicle Program</u>	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
ID	<u>Idaho Boating Program</u>	Department of Parks and Recreation	<u>Idaho Motorized Trails Program</u>	Department of Parks & Recreation
MT	<u>Boating</u>	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	<u>Off-Highway Vehicles</u>	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
NV	<u>Boating</u>	Nevada Department of Wildlife	<u>Off-Highway Vehicles Program</u>	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
NM	<u>Boating</u>	State Parks	<u>Off-Highway Vehicle Program</u>	New Mexico Game & Fish
OR	<u>Boat Oregon</u>	Oregon State Marine Board	<u>All-Terrain Vehicles</u>	Oregon Parks & Recreation Department
UT	<u>Boating Program</u>	Division of Outdoor Recreation	<u>Off-Highway Vehicle Program</u>	Division of Outdoor Recreation
WA	<u>Boating Program</u>	Washington State Parks	<u>Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Program</u>	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office
WY	<u>Boating and Watercraft</u>	Wyoming Game & Fish	<u>Off Road Recreational Vehicles</u>	Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites, & Trails

While the purview of the offices of outdoor recreation and managerial structure of state programs differs across the states, ultimately most of the states have similar programs and initiatives.

Recommendation: We can not say from this cursory overview of the organizational structures of state outdoor recreation management agencies that there is an “ideal” organizational structure, or even whether one organizational structure is “better” than the others. We could assume that more centralized organizational structures, in which state parks systems, offices of outdoor recreation, as well as boating and OHV programs, located in under one administrative entity would be more effective at developing and maintaining alignment across individual programs.

Tourism Offices & Responsible Recreation Messaging

Every state in the region has an office of tourism. These are typically housed under the statewide economic development agency. Additionally, every state has a tourism website where prospective visitors may find information on places to visit and activities to do in the state (e.g., www.visitutah.com/). Given that outdoor recreation is part of the western lifestyle, statewide tourism offices in this region highlight outdoor recreation opportunities and destinations, such as national parks.

Additionally, most of the states’ tourism websites feature information on responsible recreation (e.g., Leave No Trace, wildfire safety, and trail etiquette), though some feature it more prominently than others. For example, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming all feature a “responsible travel” link prominently at the top of their statewide tourism websites. Additionally, many of the states have developed responsible recreation and travel campaigns (e.g., Respect California, Do Colorado Right, and Idaho’s Travel With Care). These campaigns provide well-fleshed out, clear messaging on the statewide travel tourism website and highlight key topics related to responsible recreation and travel (trip preparation, Leave No Trace,

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

respect for local communities, etc.). Research shows that providing individuals information about responsible hiking behaviors, particularly staying on trail, one to three days in advance was highly effective in increasing individual's behavioral intentions to follow Leave No Trace hiking behaviors (Guo et al., 2017). This study suggests that tourism office campaigns can be effective at increasing responsible recreation behaviors among visitors.

Responsible recreation campaigns curated by tourism agencies are generally highlighted only through the state's tourism channels (primarily on the statewide travel tourism website and/or disseminated to local visitor centers managed by county destination-marketing organizations). The same study referenced above (Guo et al., 2017), found that individuals that received information on responsible hiking behaviors just before being asked about their intention to hike on a trail in a responsible manner were more likely to indicate that they would follow responsible hiking behaviors than those that had received the message one to three days before. For this reason, it would be beneficial for tourism agencies that have curated responsible recreation campaigns and marketing materials to collaborate with land managers to further disseminate such materials. Land managers are responsible for curating trailhead signage and tailoring in-person messaging delivered by staff on-site. Collaboration with site-specific land management entities, such as local community trail managers, state parks, and federal agencies such as the National Park Service, to further disseminate responsible recreation messaging and maintain consistent messaging across the state would be beneficial at increasing visitor awareness and adoption of desired responsible recreation behaviors.

Recommendation: If they haven't already done so, tourism agencies should curate and/or continue to support the development of responsible recreation education campaigns and marketing materials. Once developed, tourism agencies should partner with land managers to disseminate these messages and campaigns.

Collaboration Within and Among State and Federal Entities

There appears to be little collaboration among entities managing and advocating for outdoor recreation opportunities within states. For example, statewide tourism offices tend to be siloed and do not appear to have strong collaborations with statewide offices or divisions of outdoor recreation. Similarly, we were generally unable to find substantive evidence that there are formal mechanisms of collaboration or coordination among state park agencies, offices or divisions of outdoor recreation, and other recreation-related management entities (e.g., OHV or boating programs). Statutory bodies, like Utah's Outdoor Adventure Commission, are a step in the right direction to provide formal mechanisms for collaboration and ensure efficient use of state resources. Research outside of the context of outdoor recreation suggests these statutory bodies are most successful when they have a formal mandate, discretionary authority to guide certain aspects of their member agencies' actions, and control over state resources that benefit their member agencies (Rainey, 2003).

Additionally, we were unable to find evidence of continual coordination and collaboration between smaller scales of government (e.g., counties and municipalities) and state government entities in the outdoor recreation sphere specifically. It should be noted that statewide tourism offices generally have strong relationships and high coordination with county tourism entities (e.g., destination marketing organizations), where these exist within a state. Where states manage outdoor recreation grant programs, there is exchange of information and coordination between the grant administration entity and the county or municipality applying for a grant. However, this information exchange is generally limited to the scope

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

of the grant proposal as opposed to holistic recreation planning. To the extent possible given state funding for coordinated outdoor recreation planning, states should look to establish local-state planning networks that strive to both disseminate information about local outdoor recreation planning and development needs upwards from municipalities and counties and disseminate information about best-practices and funding resources downwards from state agencies, particularly offices/divisions of outdoor recreation.

Similarly, there appears to be even less collaboration between federal land management agencies (e.g. National Park Service or U.S. Forest Service) and state agencies related to recreation management issues. Given that a large portion of public lands within the western states consists of lands under federal land management, and a large portion of outdoor recreation occurs on such lands, states should consider avenues for increasing formal collaboration between state entities and federal land management agencies. States are well positioned to sponsor the formation of such collaboratives. Integrating federal agency leadership into statutory bodies that provide formal mechanisms for collaboration would help to align state-led policy and state-funded projects with federal policy and project priorities. Federal partners can serve in ex-officio and non-voting capacities on state commissions to serve this purpose. Previous research suggests building formal mechanisms for collaboration between state entities and federal land management agencies can help align state and federal management priorities in outdoor recreation management (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

Commissions such as Utah's Outdoor Adventure Commission, which brings together representatives from the Utah Office of Tourism, state legislature, Division of Outdoor Recreation, Utah Association of Counties, and Utah League of Cities and Towns, show promise in increasing the level of dialogue and collaboration between state agencies, as well as cities and counties. Other collaborative networks focused on addressing natural resource challenges, such as wildfire prevention and watershed protection, provide an example of the kinds of collaboratives that could be formed within states among state agencies and federal land management agencies (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). For example, Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative brings together partners from various federal and state agencies and pools funds for watershed restoration projects across the state (Clark et al., 2017).

Recommendation: Develop formal avenues for continued coordination, collaboration, and resource-sharing between state agencies and programs, counties, municipalities, and federal land management agencies.

Education Requirements and Initiatives

The three most common educational programs related to outdoor recreation are hunter education, boater education, and OHV education (Table 3). All states in the region require hunter education, though in Arizona, New Mexico, and Oregon it is required only for youth. Comparatively, only five of the eleven states require boater education for all boaters and three more require it only for youth. Utah is the only state to require OHV education for all OHV users, while California, Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon require it for youth.

While the required education varies among states, all states do offer resources and/or training related to hunter, boating, and OHV education. What is unknown is whether education requirements, as well as education offered through formal channels (e.g., structured courses) actually increases the rate of compliance with desired behaviors. This is an area with limited academic research.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Table 3

Existence of education requirements to hunt, boat, or OHV. - = education is not required, though the state may offer paid or free educational programs; Y = education is required for all; M = education is required for youth only. Youth may be those under 18-, 15-, or 14-years old, depending on specific state regulations. Note that in some states, education is only required for those born after a certain year.

Activity	AZ	CA	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	OR	UT	WA	WY
Hunting	M	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	M	Y	Y	Y
Boating	-	Y	M	-	M	Y	Y	Y	M	Y	-
OHVing	-	M	-	-	M	-	M	M	Y	-	-

Less standard across states are alternative forms of responsible recreation education, though there are unique initiatives related to this topic taken up in different states. For example, Utah requires all out-of-state boaters to complete an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Education Course before boating within the state. Idaho manages a website regarding invasive species in the state, with information on how to identify and avoid spreading invasives. There is some evidence that AIS education campaigns and training are effective at increasing individuals' AIS knowledge and adoption of desired behaviors to prevent the spread of AIS ([Jensen, 2010](#)).

Recreation Fees

OHV and boat registration fees are required in most states (Table 4). Portions of these fees often go to OHV trail maintenance or boat infrastructure (e.g., boat ramps). The cost of registration varies notably across states. OHV sticker fees and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) fees have also become common requirements across the western states, though not all states have implemented these fees. While some states charge a different fee for non-residents as compared to residents, some states charge the same cost.

Recommendation: If there are maintenance backlogs or a need for more infrastructure for OHV and motorized boats, increasing registration fees or diverting a greater portion of fees to these uses is recommended as a relatively easy and straightforward solution.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Table 4

OHV and motorized boat registration fees, OHV sticker costs for residents & non-residents, and AIS fees for motorized boats for residents & non-residents in 2022. Note that in states where registration is not required every year registration costs were divided so that the cost indicates the cost for one-year's worth of registration. Montana only allows lifetime registration on OHVs and boats.

User Fee	AZ	CA	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	OR	UT	WA	WY
OHV Registration	\$0 / \$3	\$27	\$25.25	\$0 / \$0.76	\$71.25 / \$150.50 one-time cost	\$20	\$25	\$0	\$4 - \$38 + county fees	\$30.50 / \$42.50	\$25 + county fees
Boat Registration	\$20 - \$66 + non-resident fees*	\$10	\$35.25 - \$75.25	\$31.50 <12 ft, + \$2/ft per ft >12	\$65.50 - \$295.50 one-time cost	\$20 - \$100	\$10.17 - \$22.67	\$2.50 + \$2.98/ft	\$43.50 - \$733.50 + county fees	\$27	\$30
OHV Sticker Cost resident	\$25	-	-	\$12	\$10	-	-	\$5	\$35	-	\$15
OHV Sticker Cost non-resident	\$25	\$0** / \$30	\$25.25	\$12	\$35	-	-	\$0** / \$5	\$30	\$15.75	\$15
AIS Fee resident	-	\$8	\$25	\$10	-	\$13	-	-	\$10	\$2	\$10
AIS Fee non-resident	-	-	\$50	\$30	\$30	\$13	-	\$20	\$20	\$24	\$30

*In AZ, non-residents registering their boats must also pay a Non-Resident Boating Safety Infrastructure Fee which ranges from \$80-\$429 depending on boat size.

**CA, NV, NM, and OR all offer reciprocity for OHV stickers; residents of these states do not need to buy stickers in reciprocating states.

The cost of an annual fishing or hunting license, as well as a buck deer tag, varies widely across the region (Table 5). All states do charge non-residents notably higher fees than residents, though the extent to which the fees differ varies across the states. In Arizona, a fishing license for non-residents costs roughly 50% more than for residents, while in Montana it costs roughly 280% more. All states except Washington require the purchase of a hunting license or small game license before a deer tag may be purchased. Some states have additional fees required when purchasing a hunting or fishing license which are included in the cost indicated in Table 5. For example, Idaho charges a \$5 depredation fee for residents and \$10 for non-residents, which is required before purchasing an annual hunting or fishing license. Similarly, Montana charges residents an \$8 conservation license fee and \$2 AIS pass fee with the purchase of each fishing license, in addition to the \$21 license fee, which brings the total license cost to \$31. Non-residents are charged \$10 for a conservation license, \$7.50 for an AIS pass, and \$100 for an annual fishing license, bringing the total cost to non-residents to \$117.50.

Table 5

Annual fishing and hunting license costs for residents and non-residents in 2022, as well as tag costs for a buck deer.

License Type	AZ	CA	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	OR	UT	WA	WY
Fishing license resident	\$37	\$58.58	\$47.30	\$35.50	\$31	\$40	\$3	\$44	\$34	\$55.35	\$48.50
Fishing license non-resident	\$55	\$15.8.25	\$112.99	\$11.8	\$117.50	\$80	\$7	\$11	\$85	\$12.4.65	\$12.3.50
Hunting license resident	\$37	\$54	\$42	\$20.75	\$18	\$38	\$1	\$34.5	\$34	-	\$21.50
Hunting license non-resident	\$160 incl. fishing license	\$18.8.74	\$97.09	\$19.5	\$25	\$155 incl. fishing license	\$6	\$17	\$72	-	\$21.50
Deer tag resident	\$58	\$35.38	\$49.14	\$24.75	\$16	\$43	\$4	\$28.50	\$40	\$44.90	\$42
Deer tag non-resident	\$315	\$31	\$429.40 incl. fishing license	\$35.1.75	\$646 incl. fishing license	\$253	\$2	\$44	\$398 incl. hunting license	\$43.4.30	\$37

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

State Park Systems

Managed Assets

The number of assets that state park systems manage varies widely, from the traditional state park, to campgrounds, trail systems, and other recreation areas. In the 2019-2020 operating season, California’s state park system managed the greatest number of acres, at 1,647,950 acres managed, and campsites, with 16,158 campsites managed (Table 6). Colorado’s state park system managed a similar magnitude of acres, at 1,468,239 acres, but much fewer campsites, with 4,530 campsites managed. The state managing the greatest number of acres per resident in the state was Colorado, with 0.2543 acres managed per resident of the state. The state managing the smallest number of acres per resident in the state was Arizona, with 0.0086 acres managed per resident. Colorado also had the greatest number of acres in the state park system compared to the total acreage of the state, with 2.2% of all acres in the state managed by the state park system. Arizona similarly had the smallest number of acres in the state park system compared to the total acreage of the state, with 0.08% of total acres in the state managed by the state park system.

The number of personnel working for each park system also varied greatly across the states (Table 6). Additionally, the proportion of seasonal employees to full-time employees varied notably and appears to reflect different management approaches of the park systems. For example, Arizona’s state park system hired few seasonal employees (29) as compared to the number of full-time employees (212); California had a similar number of seasonal employees (1,971) as full-time employees (1,986); and Utah hired many more seasonal employees (533) than the number of full-time employees (209). Colorado had the smallest ratio of full-time and seasonal employees to the number of acres managed by the state park system, with 0.0002 full-time employees to acres managed and 0.0004 seasonal employees to acres managed. Washington had the highest ratio of full-time employees to number of acres managed, with 0.0050 full-time employees to acres managed and Idaho had the highest ratio of seasonal employees to the number of acres managed with 0.0050 seasonal employees to acres managed.

Table 6

State park system managed assets, from the 2019-2020 National Association of State Park Directors’s Statistical Report of State Park Operations.

Measure	AZ	CA	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	OR	UT	WA	WY
# operating state parks	16	88	41	19	54	13	54	54	45	90	12
# acres managed	61,794	1,648,950	1,468,239	58,922	44,235	151,453	122,847	122,847	153,745	110,819	102,311
# acres managed per resident*	0.0086	0.0417	0.2543	0.0320	0.0408	0.0488	0.0908	0.0290	0.0470	0.0144	0.1774
% of acres in state in state park system**	0.08%	1.57%	2.20%	0.11%	0.05%	0.21%	0.25%	0.20%	0.28%	0.24%	0.16%
# improved campsite areas	16	87	32	17	18	144	43	43	56	74	10
# improved campsites	1207	12,947	4,297	1,837	376	939	5,178	5,178	1,483	5,869	257
# improved campsites per resident*	0.00017	0.00033	0.00074	0.00100	0.00035	0.00030	0.00205	0.00122	0.00045	0.00076	0.00045
# primitive campsite areas	11	62	10	4	23	16	18	18	47	23	10
# primitive campsites	300	3,211	233	162	548	1,799	321	321	680	486	1,490
# primitive campsites per resident*	0.00004	0.00008	0.00004	0.00009	0.00051	0.00058	0.00203	0.00008	0.00021	0.00006	0.00258
# full-time personnel	212	1,986	265	153	65	130	189	396	209	554	91
# full-time personnel per acre managed	0.0034	0.0012	0.0002	0.0026	0.0015	0.0009	0.0010	0.0032	0.0014	0.0050	0.0009
# seasonal personnel	29	1,971	619	297	115	145	46	86	533	475	190
# seasonal personnel per acre managed	0.0005	0.0012	0.0004	0.0050	0.0026	0.0010	0.0002	0.0007	0.0035	0.0043	0.0019

*Census Bureau estimates are used for the population in each state in 2020.

**Acres in each state are from the USGS Gap Analysis Project Protected Areas Statistics Dashboard.

Fees and Visitation

The fee structure differs across state park systems (*see companion table*). In Montana and Idaho, the state parks annual pass is an option when renewing vehicle registration. If residents do not opt in to

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

the nominal fee on their registration (\$9 in Montana and \$10 in Idaho), they are not eligible to enter state parks without a fee. However, this is not enforced in practice in Montana, making entry free to those with Montana vehicle license plates at Montana state parks. Idaho does provide a state parks annual pass sticker to affix to the dashboard of a personal vehicle to confirm that the annual pass was purchased. Each of the other state park systems in the region sell the state parks annual passes separately, with fees ranging from \$30 for residents in Oregon and Washington to \$200 in Arizona for the most inclusive annual pass option, which includes weekend and holiday access. Idaho, Montana, Utah, and Wyoming charge non-residents more for annual passes than residents, while the other states charge non-residents the same cost. Day-use entrance fees are also more expensive at certain parks for non-residents in Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. The states that charge non-residents higher camping fees at certain locations and sites are Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Wyoming.

Visitation varies across the state park systems (Table 7). California state parks reported the greatest number of visits overall in the 2019-2020 operating season, with 68,165,707 total day and overnight visits. Arizona reported the fewest visits, with 2,942,589. Idaho reported the greatest proportion of visits to operating areas, with 250,067 visits per operating area. Colorado reported the fewest visits per operating area, with 22,970 visits per operating area.

Table 7

Visits to state park managed areas, from the 2019-2020 National Association of State Park Directors’s Statistical Report of State Park Operations. “-” indicates that totals are not provided (for visits). Note that these numbers are self-reported by the state park managing agency so they may not be directly comparable.

State	# day visits to fee areas	# day visits to non-fee areas	# overnight visits to fee areas	# overnight visits to non-fee areas	Total number of day & overnight visits	Ratio of total visits : number of operating areas
AZ	2,011,906	-	930,683	-	2,942,589	94,922
CA	19,511,277	43,300,313	5,354,117	-	68,165,707	245,200
CO	17,066,484	-	-*	-	17,066,484	22,970
ID	6,569,436	-	682,509	-	7,251,945	250,067
MT	-	3,247,487	69,945	-	3,317,432	61,434
NV	3,424,692	69,194	205,402	-	3,699,288	147,972
NM	1,370,161	-	2,659,723	-	4,029,884	108,916
OR	9,480,475	32,503,031	989,482	1,263,221	42,972,988	207,682
UT	9,060,342	-	3,020,114	-	12,080,456	172,578
WA	32,793,051	-	-	1,924,913	32,793,051	176,233
WY	1,792,059	2,703,744	511,130	-	5,006,933	135,323

*In CO, overnight visits are not counted separately from day visits.

Revenue Sources

Most state park systems are funded primarily through user fees. All of the state park systems in this region receive funding from user and entrance fees and permits, motor fuel tax, and donations. Additional sources of revenue for state park systems vary across the region (Table 8). In some states, a portion of snowmobile, OHV, and boat registration fees go to the state park system. Oregon’s state park system is the only one in the region funded partly through lottery proceeds. Most of the states in the region charge employees for housing, which contributes to the state park system funding. Other common revenue sources include lease permits, publications & souvenir sales, and concessionaires licensing. Less common are tobacco products taxes, petroleum products taxes, tourism sales taxes, and state land board trusts. When state park systems receive funding from the general fund, this is most often for capital improvement projects (i.e., new infrastructure), and generally not for ongoing operating and maintenance

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

expenses. Recent research has documented how state park systems may find it difficult to maintain their current level of service to visitors as state park use levels outpace revenues (Smith, Wilkins, & Leung, 2019). Consequently, many state park systems may soon find themselves in the position of needing to increase and diversify revenue streams. State park systems should consider all the options available to them as viable mechanisms to meet this need. State park systems can increase and diversify revenue streams by increasing user fees, employing differential pricing structures (e.g., charging non-residents more or charging more for use during periods of peak demand), and entering into public-private partnerships.

Recommendation: State park systems should consider all the options available to them as viable mechanisms to increase and diversify revenue streams to support maintaining a high-level of service for visitors. State park systems can increase and diversify revenue streams by increasing user fees, employing differential pricing structures (e.g., charging non-residents more or charging more for use during periods of peak demand), and entering into public-private partnerships.

Table 8

Revenue sources for the state park system, from the 2019-2020 National Association of State Park Directors' Statistical Report of State Park Operations. A "Y" indicates that it is a source of funding for that specific state's state park system. The numbers in parentheses indicate how many state park systems rely on the noted form of revenue for financing (i.e., 16 of the 50 states' state park systems rely on snowmobiles as a funding source). All states in this region receive funding from the following sources: park user & entrance fees & permits (43/50 states receive funding from this source), motor fuel tax (17/50), and donations (46/50). None of the states in this region receive funding from the following: real estate transfer tax (8/50), sporting goods tax (7/50), and hunter licenses/fines (2/50).

Revenue Source	AZ	CA	CO	ID	MT	NV	NM	OR	UT	WA	WY
Snowmobile Registration (16/50)			Y		Y				Y	Y	Y
OHVs/ATVs Registration (19/50)	Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y
Boats Registration (16/50)	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	
Lottery (5/50)								Y			
Motor Vehicle Plates/Permits (15/50)				Y				Y		Y	
Employee Housing Payments (28/50)	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y		Y	Y
Lease Permits (Ski, Lake, Ag.) (35/50)		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y
Publications & Souvenir Sales (38/50)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
Concessionaires Licensing (40/50)	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Tobacco Products Tax (4/50)		Y									
Petroleum Products Tax (4/50)		Y	Y								
Sales Tax Tourism (7/50)					Y						
Investment Interest (16/50)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y			
State Land Board Trusts (2/50)			Y								
Other (22/50)	Y		Y					Y		Y	Y
General Fund (40/50)		Y		Y			Y		Y	Y	Y

Funding for Outdoor Recreation Efforts

State funding to support outdoor recreation efforts is generated from a variety of sources, such as user fees, line-item appropriations from state legislatures, tax revenues, and lottery funds. Funding goes to the management of state programs and entities, such as the state park agencies, offices of outdoor recreation, and OHV or boating programs, as well as state grant programs to provide funding to other entities (e.g., nonprofits, federal governments, and county/municipal governments) for outdoor recreation infrastructure projects.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

We evaluate the funding and planning assistance opportunities available through state-sponsored recreation planning support and state grant programs dedicated to the development of outdoor recreation infrastructure, off-highway vehicle recreation infrastructure, and motorized boating infrastructure.

State Planning Assistance

Forward-thinking, comprehensive recreation planning is a common need across communities. However, there are few states in the region that offer technical assistance to communities with outdoor recreation planning. Notable programs and initiatives to address this need across the states in the western region include:

- Washington's Recreation and Conservation Office has a Planning for Recreation Access grant program which assists communities with preparing recreation plans and soliciting community feedback. This program is geared to diverse urban neighborhoods and small rural communities that typically don't have adequate access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Notably, many of the grants administered by the Recreation & Conservation Office also require applicants to have long-range comprehensive recreation plans before applying for grants.
- Utah's Division of Outdoor Recreation recently created a Statewide Planning Assistance Program. The program is supported by a statewide planner who works with communities to develop outdoor recreation plans, solicit public engagement in recreation planning, evaluate current trail use, and conceptualize the design of new trails.
- New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Division hired a nonprofit consultant to work with each region in the state to assist communities with developing outdoor recreation strategic plans, compile data, and prioritize outdoor recreation projects. The goal of these planning efforts is to support economic development related to outdoor recreation opportunities across the state in an equitable, sustainable manner.
- Great Outdoors Colorado offers a Planning & Capacity grant to assist municipalities, counties, nonprofits such as land trusts, Colorado Parks & Wildlife, and other similar entities with the creation of strategic plans and master plans for outdoor recreation and conservation, as well as research projects, community engagement and education, and partnership and collaboration development.

Additionally, the states across this region that offer outdoor recreation grant programs (noted below) generally will provide assistance to prospective applicants with preparing grant applications. However, assistance with specific grant applications is not commensurate with comprehensive recreation planning. Given that this is a common need across communities in the region, especially those with smaller populations and limited resources, the creation and development of state programs that provide comprehensive technical assistance with long-range recreation planning is recommended.

Recommendation: States should consider creating and supporting technical assistance planning programs to support communities with developing comprehensive, long-range recreation plans.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

Outdoor Recreation Grant Programs

Most states in the region have grant programs specifically for outdoor recreation, such as grants for outdoor recreation infrastructure development and rehabilitation, environmental education, and increasing access to recreation opportunities (Table 9). These are in addition to existing federal pass-through grant programs, such as the Land, Water, and Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The amount of funding dedicated to these grant programs as well as the funding sources varies notably across the states. Many of the grant programs rely at least partly on legislative appropriations. Some of the programs receive funding from a portion of state gasoline taxes, license/registration fees, lottery funds, or other sources such as state bonds or private donations.

Grant program funding from an ongoing source, such as lottery funds or dedicated tax streams, is more dependable than one-time funding that varies year-to-year. The administrative needs of grant programs include staffing to answer questions and assist prospective grantees with the proposal process, review proposals, and allocate funds. Continual funding streams for grant programs therefore provide some continuity in the administrative support and opportunities for funding over the years.

Recommendation: Dedicated, continual funding for outdoor recreation grant programs lessens the burden of grant administration and provides continuity in the grant opportunities available.

Table 9

Outdoor recreation grant programs, excluding grant programs specifically for off-highway vehicle or boating projects and federal pass-through programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund or Recreational Trails Program.

State	Outdoor recreation grant opportunities	Projects qualified for grant funding	Funding sources	Funds distributed in most recent reported year	Managing agency or program
AZ	Heritage Fund	Outdoor environmental education programs; parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation)	Legislative appropriations	\$2.5M	Arizona State Parks & Trails
CA	Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Program; Outdoor Equity Grants; Habitat Conservation Fund; Regional Park Program; Rural Recreation and Tourism Program; Locally-Operated State Park Program; Per Capita Program; Recreational Infrastructure Revenue Enhancement Program	Parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation); education/access opportunities for underserved communities; youth education infrastructure; education programs; renovation of aging state park infrastructure	Legislative appropriations; California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018; 2018 Parks and Water Bond Act (Proposition 68)	\$885M	California Department of Parks & Recreation
CO	Outdoor Equity Grant Program; Great Outdoors Colorado grant programs*	Education/access for underserved communities; parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation)	Lottery funds	\$70.4M*	Colorado Parks & Wildlife, Great Outdoors Colorado (independent board)
ID	Recreational Vehicle Fund; Road & Bridge Fund	RV facilities; roads, bridges, and parking areas within and leading to recreation areas within the state (new construction and rehabilitation)	RV license fees; State gas tax	\$4.75M	Idaho State Parks and Recreation
MT	Trail Stewardship Program; Community Pond Program; MT WILD Education Center grant	New trail and shared-use path construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of trailside and trailhead facilities; construction or improvement of public fishing ponds; school visits to the WILD education center	Portion of light vehicle registration fee; portion of marijuana tax revenue; hunting/angling licenses; legislative appropriations	\$1.8M	Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
NV	Outdoor Education and Recreation Grant	Education/access for underserved youth	Private donations	No funding reported yet	Nevada State Parks
NM	Outdoor Equity Fund, Outdoor Recreation Trails+ Grant	Education/access for underserved youth; outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation)	Legislative appropriations; private donations	\$1.3M**	Outdoor Recreation Division
OR	County Opportunity Grant Program; Local Government Grant Program; Conservation & Recreation Fund	County-operated camping facilities (new construction and maintenance); parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation); conservation and increasing recreation opportunities	Portion of recreational vehicle registration fees; state lottery funds; legislative appropriations; private donations	\$6.8M	Oregon Parks and Recreation Department; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
UT	Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant; Recreation Restoration Infrastructure; Utah Outdoor Classroom Grant; Utah Children's Outdoor Recreation and Education grant	Outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation); youth education infrastructure; youth education programs	0.32% statewide Transient Room Tax; Outdoor Adventure Infrastructure Restricted Account (1% of all sales taxes); legislative appropriations from the General Fund	\$10.9M	Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation - Grants & Planning Program
WA	Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account; Community Forests Program; No Child Left Inside; Outdoor Learning Grants; Washington Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Grant***; Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program	Public access to waterfronts; recreation opportunities in forests (land acquisition and new construction); youth education programs; parks and outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction and rehabilitation)	Revenue generated from aquatic lands (i.e. leases on waterfronts or harvest rights for clams); sale of state bonds; legislative appropriations; gas tax; off-road vehicle use permits	\$26.6M***	Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office - Funding board
WY	Outdoor Recreation Grant program	Outdoor recreation infrastructure (new construction only)	Federal American Rescue Plan Act funds & Wyoming Office of Tourism	\$20M allocated in 2022, but uncertain how much is from the state (non-federal funds)	Wyoming Outdoor Recreation Office

*Great Outdoors Colorado's grant programs include conservation and recreation related grant programs. We cannot differentiate the funding spent exclusively on recreation-related projects and conservation projects, so this number accounts for both.

**New Mexico's Outdoor Recreation Trails+ grant program distributed \$7M in funds in 2022, but these were from one-time federal funding. We attempt to account only for non-federal funding sources in this table.

***Washington's grant programs are administered bi-annually, and the funding total represented here is the amount of funding allocated over the most recent two-year grant allocation period divided by two. The Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Grant may be used for non-motorized projects, and roughly \$2.6M in grant funds in 2022 were awarded to non-motorized projects.

Off-Highway Vehicle Grant Programs

Off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation grant programs are standard across the western states. Funding for these programs comes from OHV registration fees as well as mandatory OHV trail passes. OHV grants can generally be used for a variety of projects, including land acquisition to build OHV trails, construction and rehabilitation of existing trails, law enforcement, search and rescue efforts, education and safety, signage, and staffing for OHV management.

Table 10

Off-highway vehicle grant programs, excluding federal pass-through programs, such as the Recreational Trails Program, where possible.

State	OHV grant programs	Funding source	Funds distributed in most recent reported year	Managing agency or program
AZ	Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Fund	State gas tax; OHV sticker cost	\$2M	Arizona State Parks & Trails
CA	OHV Grants and Cooperative Agreements Program	Gas tax; entrance fees; off-highway vehicle sticker registrations	\$29.4M	California State Parks - Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation
CO	Off-Highway Vehicle Grant	OHV registration and permit fees; Recreational Trails Program*	\$6.2M*	Colorado Parks & Wildlife
ID	Off-Road Motor Vehicle Fund; Motorbike Fund	State gas tax; ATV, Motorbike, and UTV registrations	\$0.8M	Idaho Parks & Recreation
MT	Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant; Off-Highway Vehicle Grant	OHV resident trail pass; state legislature appropriations	\$0.4M	Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
NV	Off-highway Vehicle Grant	OHV registration	\$0.75M	Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Off-Highway Vehicles Program
NM	Off-Highway Vehicle Grant	OHV registration	-**	New Mexico Game & Fish - Off-Highway Vehicle Program
OR	All-Terrain Vehicle Grant	User permit sales; gas tax	\$0.57M	Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
UT	OHV Recreation Grant; Year-Round OHV Land Acquisition Grant	OHV registration fees	\$3.1M	Utah Division of Outdoor Recreation
WA	Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Grant***	Gas tax; off-road vehicle use permits	\$2.7M***	Washington Recreation and Conservation Office
WY	OHV Partnership Grants	ORV and snowmobile permits	\$1.8M****	Wyoming State Parks and Cultural Resources

*Funding amounts in Colorado include federal Recreational Trails Program funds, which cannot be differentiated from state sources of funding.

**No information is readily accessible online regarding prior grant awards, prior funding amounts, or available funding amount.

***Washington's Nonhighway and Off-Road Vehicle Activities Grant is awarded bi-annually and the 2022 award totals were divided by two here to be representative of the approximate annual funding amount. This grant may also be used for non-motorized projects, and the portion of funding from this grant going to non-motorized projects is captured in the outdoor recreation grant table above.

****The most recent year grant award information is provided is 2018, so this number is from the 2018 grant cycle. This also includes the value of the Wyoming Trail Crew grant, for which Wyoming's Trail Crew assists with maintenance, rehabilitation, and development work on motorized trails.

Conclusion

In this report, we have provided an objective comparison of how states across the Western U.S. fund, manage, and support outdoor recreation. We focused on state agencies, policies, programs, and resources given our intent was to inform the policy discussions and decisions of state agency staff and elected officials. We specifically detailed:

- Characteristics of the western states (including population, proportion of federal and state land ownership, state general expenditures, and the role of outdoor recreation in the state economy)

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

- The existence of state entities that manage or support outdoor recreation (state park agencies, OHV and boating programs, and offices or divisions of outdoor recreation)
- Hunting, boating, and OHV education requirements and responsible recreation campaigns developed by state entities
- Recreation fees, including OHV and boating registration cost and hunting and fishing license costs
- State park agency managed assets, visitation, and revenue sources
- The existence of state planning assistance programs for outdoor recreation planning and outdoor recreation, OHV, and boating grant programs

The comparative analysis points to a variety of recommendations for state agency staff and elected officials. These recommendations, reiterated from above, are:

- While we can not say from this cursory overview of the organizational structures of state outdoor recreation management agencies that there is an “ideal” organizational structure, or even whether one organizational structure is “better” than the others. We could assume that more centralized organizational structures, in which state parks systems, offices of outdoor recreation, as well as boating and OHV programs, located in under one administrative entity would be more effective at developing and maintaining alignment across individual programs.
- If they haven’t already done so, tourism agencies should curate and/or continue to support the development of responsible recreation education campaigns and marketing materials. Once developed, tourism agencies should partner with land managers to disseminate these messages and campaigns.
- Develop formal avenues for continued coordination, collaboration, and resource-sharing between state agencies and programs, counties, municipalities, and federal land management agencies.
- If there are maintenance backlogs or a need for more infrastructure for OHV and motorized boats, increasing registration fees or diverting a greater portion of fees to these uses is recommended as a relatively easy and straightforward solution.
- State park systems should consider all the options available to them as viable mechanisms to increase and diversify revenue streams to support maintaining a high-level of service for visitors. State park systems can increase and diversify revenue streams by increasing user fees, employing differential pricing structures (e.g., charging non-residents more or charging more for use during periods of peak demand), and entering into public-private partnerships.
- States should consider creating and supporting technical assistance planning programs to support communities with developing comprehensive, long-range recreation plans.
- Outdoor recreation grant programs are an effective means of distributing funds to develop and rehabilitate outdoor recreation infrastructure and increase access to outdoor recreation opportunities across the state. Dedicated, continual funding for outdoor recreation grant programs (as opposed to line-item legislative appropriations) ensures administrative continuity and opportunities for grants.

We believe that adoption of these recommendations will move outdoor recreation policy and management to be more cohesive and sustainable across the western states.

Outdoor Recreation Across the Western United States

References

- Clark, A., Thompson, T., Vernon, J., & Whittaker, A. (2017). Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative: Restoring watersheds at a landscape scale. *Human–Wildlife Interactions*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.26077/g8we-ta66>
- Guo, T., Smith, J. W., Moore, R. L., & Schultz, C. L. (2017). Integrating off-site visitor education into landscape conservation and management: An examination of timing of educational messaging and compliance with low-impact hiking recommendations. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 164, 25–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2017.03.013>
- Jensen, D. A. (2010). *Assessing the effectiveness of aquatic invasive species outreach influencing boater behavior in five states*. <http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/187538>
- Leung, Y. -F., Cheung, S. -Y., & Smith, J. W. (2022). Statistical report of state park operations: 2019-2020 – Annual Information Exchange for the Period of July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. Raleigh, NC: Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, NC State University.
- Rainey, H. G., (2003). *Understanding and managing public organizations* (3rd. ed). Jossy-Bass.
- Sausser, B., Monz, C., Dorsch, T. E., & Smith, J. W. (2019). The formation of state offices of outdoor recreation and an analysis of their ability to partner with federal land management agencies. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 27, 100232. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jort.2019.100232>
- Smith, J. W., Wilkins, E. J., & Leung, Y.-F. (2019). Attendance trends threaten future operations of America's state park systems. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(26), 12775–12780. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1902314116>
- Wondelleck, J. M., & Yaffee, S. L. (2000). *Making collaboration work: Lessons from innovation in natural resource management*. Island Press.