



Rocky
Mountain
Conservancy

Strategic Plan 2024-2028

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONSERVANCY

2024-2028 Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

Established in 1931, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy promotes stewardship of Rocky Mountain National Park and similar lands through education and philanthropy.

Core Values Shared by Directors and Staff

Caretakers of the Land, People, and Time – Rocky Mountain Conservancy protects the landscape of Rocky Mountain National Park and similar lands for future generations and acknowledges the people who have lived on and cared for this land in the past and present. We value the time and resources Conservancy staff and volunteers put into their work and strive to treat our staff, volunteers, partners, donors, members, visitors, and communities served with awareness, honesty, and sensitivity to their socioeconomic, historical, and cultural contexts.

Guardians of Sound Actions and Funds - Rocky Mountain Conservancy acts with integrity in its decisions surrounding the future sustainability of all resources, including the environment, community, public health, finances, and people. We use charitable funds efficiently and offer transparency to donors, members, and the public, while complying with regulations and best practices related to conducting business as a nonprofit organization.

Guides to Learning - Rocky Mountain Conservancy provides meaningful educational experiences to enhance understanding of the legacy, conservation, threats, and protection of our public lands. As guides to our lands and waters, we embrace our role to inspire awe and appreciation through engaging and accessible programs, hands-on experiences, and innovative educational products.

Stewards for the Future – Rocky Mountain Conservancy commits to ongoing and evolving stewardship at the highest level through effective advocacy, science-based decision-making, and targeted stewardship work. We support service projects and scientific research to address a wide range of challenges surrounding public lands and waters use. Our focus is to connect people to the land in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Foundational Imperatives

The realization of certain objectives from the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan are judged so fundamental to the essence of the organization and its ongoing success that they are incorporated in the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan as “Foundational Imperatives.” This plan then addresses goals for the next five years and the objectives under each goal to achieve them.

Foundational Imperative One – CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Board of Directors is the legally constituted steward of this 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation charged with setting policy and overall strategic direction in a professional and accountable way. The board does much of its work through standing and ad hoc committees that provide program oversight and support and report to the full board. The Executive Committee is empowered to act for the board and reports to the full board accordingly. Additionally, the Executive Committee is responsible for board recruitment and evaluates board diversity, special skills, and capacity. The board delegates authority to the executive director to provide day-to-day leadership, honor its commitments, and keep the board informed on matters critical to its continued success. The executive director empowers the staff to provide exemplary service, implement agreed-upon strategies and directives, and hold themselves equally professional and accountable.

Foundational Imperative Two – IT AND OPERATING SYSTEMS

Maintaining best practices financial, information, security, and risk management systems is essential to efficient operations, continued growth, and the external credibility of the organization to donors and members. Systems deemed essential include accounting, point of sale, donor management, payroll, and security software. These must be operated on secure infrastructure, including workstations, servers, and firewalls. Best practices require staff skills and technical tools to assess operations and projects to ensure proper expenditures.

Foundational Imperative Three – EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

The board is committed to employing a trained and dedicated staff at all levels of the organization that exemplifies the highest quality of work to accomplish its mission. Central to this is the board’s ongoing commitment to being a non-profit employer of choice in the region. The Conservancy is committed to best practices Human Resources (HR) support and diversity among board, staff, and all audiences served. Staff members are expected

to be adaptable, hard-working, and collaborative. The Conservancy supports and HR tracks individually tailored professional development opportunities, including supervisory training and job-specific certifications.

Affirming these Foundational Imperatives, we will build on them to achieve the following Goals (Strategic Initiatives) and Objectives (Strategies for Action) for the next five years.

Goals

Goal One – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Ensure financial sustainability by continuing to grow diversified revenues.

Objective A: Philanthropy - A vibrant and engaged volunteer board and Philanthropy Department staffed by development professionals is essential to funding the goals of this plan.

- Increase funding relationships with major individual donors, national and local foundations, and corporate partners.
- Expand annual giving campaign and mini-project-specific campaigns throughout the year, including matching or incentive fund opportunities like Colorado Gives Day.
- Cultivate grant funding opportunities and partnerships.
- Coordinate capital campaign expectations with RMNP priorities.
- Nurture planned giving opportunities with individual donors.
- Explore and evaluate appropriate entrepreneurial actions that might supplement financial sustainability.
- Expand communications initiatives to increase visibility of Conservancy achievements and support for its programs by promoting our mission and protecting our brand.

Objective B: Retail – Along with philanthropy, retail operations are the twin pillar of financial sustainability. Operational priorities are effective merchandising, inventory management, efficient warehousing, and requisite staffing. The basis for retail success is a mutually beneficial merchandising and space relationship with RMNP.

- Consider retail outlet expansion if deemed a valuable strategic partnership, e.g. the Estes Park Visitor Center and Old Gallery.
- Evaluate profitability of in-park existing or proposed retail locations.

- Emphasize recruitment and retention of retail clerks and warehouse personnel, recognizing clerks are important not only in generating revenue but also as the face of the organization to visitors.
- Seek out and embrace additional opportunities to increase gross profit margin with in-house publications and products, point of sale promotions, and inventory management.
- Respond to threats that affect Conservancy operations and those of RMNP, staying prepared to utilize non-park retail locations to respond to government shutdowns

Objective C: Membership – Recognizing roots of membership are in the cooperating association (Rocky Mountain Nature Association) and project-specific donors (including former Rocky Mountain Associates) who gave to Rocky Mountain National Park, membership remains the threshold introduction to the organization and supports general operations.

- Emphasize membership retention tied to mission support from a developing constituency rather than one-time members responding to retail discounts.
- Recruit and retain new members, emphasizing avenues to convert a higher proportion of members to donors.

Goal Two - FACILITIES

Strengthen infrastructure to better serve organizational mission and eliminate or reduce obstacles to fulfilling it.

Objective A: Housing – While the construction of Rocky Terrace Cottages (2024) provides sixteen beds in four four-bedroom units to house interns, fellows, and seasonal Conservation Corps and retail staff, it does not solve all housing needs. Improving the quality and quantity of Conservancy and RMNP staff and intern housing opportunities remains a priority.

- Pursue gift and/or purchase opportunities to increase Conservancy-owned housing assets, e.g. 2022 acquisition of Young-Pierce cabin.
- Participate in discussions and take a leadership role for solutions for housing initiatives in the Estes Valley and Grand County.
- Coordinate with RMNP in seasonal campsite use for Conservation Corps at RMNP locations and, and eventually, the administrative campground at Cascade Cottages.

Objective B: Retail, Warehousing, Office and Program Spaces -

- Further strengthen retail space footprint (e.g. MPDC and EPVC recent additions; KVC expansion slated 2025).
- Develop and implement a plan for increasing inventory and warehousing efficiencies.
- Evaluate office and program space requirements and implement a sustainable and responsive plan to accommodate growth.

Objective C: Fall River Visitor Center - The 2000 construction of Fall River Visitor Center outside of RMNP, associated with adjacent commercial operations and funded by a private trust, remains a landmark in public-private cooperation. The 25-year lease between the National Park Service and Scrogin Trust expires in 2025.

- Participate in lease renewal negotiations between RMNP and Scrogin Trust to maximize use of facility for the Conservancy's retail, education, and other programming.

Goal Three – EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Provide, support, and expand nationally recognized educational, interpretive, and stewardship programming.

Objective A: RMNP Education and Interpretive Programming

- Support existing RMNP education programs financially and where appropriate facilitate their expansion to larger audiences, which may include distance learning, traveling exhibits, and on-site visits.
- Support new west side based RMNP education staff and interns planned for 2024 and growing importance of Holzwarth Ranch Historic Site to park's interpretive mission.
- Coordinate the Conservancy's educational programs with re-energized RMNP evening amphitheater programming.

Objective B: Conservancy Education Programs

- Refine as appropriate and implement the recommendations of the 2021 Conservancy Ad Hoc Education Committee white paper.
- Develop and promote educational programs, including the Field Institute, that focus on future generational stewardship and promote the broadest possible engagement among diverse groups.

- Develop educational programming and visitor orientation for Estes Park Visitor Center in cooperation with Town of Estes Park.
- Regularly assess program learning outcomes and financial impacts, recognizing that education programming is a key part of our mission and some programs may not be self-supporting.
- Monitor changes in visitor expectations and experiences.

Objective C: Conservation Corps

- Having just celebrated its 20th year, grow the number of Conservation Corps participants working in RMNP and similar public lands, and on cultural and historic preservation projects. Continue to stress on-the-ground physical work to benefit the resource as well as learning opportunities in leadership and teamwork to nurture the next generation of environmental stewards.
- Further enhance the reputation for excellence this program enjoys in the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service at the regional and national levels.
- Track future career paths of Conservation Corps participants as part of assessing success of the program.

Objective D: Publications

- Evaluate past and current publications efforts and develop a plan to revitalize publications program to promote educational mission with historical, environmental, cultural, and youth stewardship content.
- Evaluate how these publications could increase retail sales.

Objective E: Governmental Cooperation and Advocacy

- Work with federal, state, local, and Tribal government officials and associated non-profits to address and advocate for appropriate public policy issues, such as all levels of education, workforce housing, visitor use management, DEI initiatives (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), land protection, and RMNP backlog maintenance.
- Encourage staff interaction with similar organizations.
- Be responsive to fulfilling existing NPS Cooperating Association and Friends agreements (i.e. joint workplans).
- Promote these efforts with appropriate communications initiatives.

Goal Four – STEWARDSHIP OF RESOURCES

Protect, enhance, and restore the natural and cultural resources of RMNP and similar lands.

Objective A: Land Acquisition and Protection – In the past 40 years, the Conservancy has been instrumental in assisting in the acquisition of numerous key parcels of land in and near RMNP.

- Significantly increase the amount of funding and related financial resources committed to revolving land acquisition fund to facilitate long-range acquisitions as well as exigencies.
- Coordinate with RMNP and pursue priority list of in-holding and buffer acquisitions.
- Respond to key environmental threats and land use issues that affect Conservancy programs and those of RMNP, emphasizing habitat enhancement and preservation.

Objective B: Signature Projects

- Take a leadership role in and coordinate with RMNP on major projects within RMNP and related lands that offer significant ecological importance, organizational visibility, and collaborative partnerships. An on-going example is the Kawuneeche Valley Restoration Collaborative (KVRC).
- Consider larger projects that have multi-year commitments and long-term ramifications, especially when they support additional elements of the Conservancy’s mission, specifically, Conservation Corps work on trail construction, historic preservation, and backcountry campsites.
- Update the list of Sustainability Fund projects.
- Explore a visionary plan for the next 30 years about what the Conservancy will do to preserve RMNP for succeeding generations, while continuing to coordinate with other regional and statewide efforts.

Objective C: Visitor Use Management and Quality Experiences – The Conservancy has historically funded a variety of needs at the main RMNP entrances: Beaver Meadows, Fall River, Wild Basin, and Kawuneeche,

- Anticipate and coordinate with RMNP needs arising from increased visitor access at secondary visitor access points.

- Provide a range of opportunities and services to inspire and enrich the experiences of a variety of visitors. Provide information in a variety of ways to help visitors plan ahead for safe and enjoyable experiences that minimize impacts on park resources.

Implementation Directive

This strategic plan is intended to be mission-driven but dynamic and adaptable as issues arise and opportunities present themselves. The board intends staff to structure its regular reporting to the board around these four goals and the progress toward implementing the respective objectives. The executive director will incorporate appropriate tasks and benchmarks toward achieving these objectives into individual staff workplans. In so doing, we will measure the progress made in achieving stated goals and make whatever adjustments seem appropriate, thereby becoming a stronger, more successful organization.