

EXHIBIT 4



Department Priority: S-01, BA-03
Request Detail: Staff and Operating for State Park at Sweetwater Lake

Summary of Funding Change for FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23			
		Incremental Change	
	FY 2021-22 Appropriation	FY 2021-22 Request	FY 2022-23 Request
Total Funds	\$74,716,473	\$93,209	\$426,921
FTE	265.0	0.3	3.0
General Fund	\$6,165,644	\$0	\$0
Cash Funds	\$66,628,193	\$93,209	\$426,921
Reappropriated Funds	\$680,613	\$0	\$0
Federal Funds	\$1,242,023	\$0	\$0

Summary of Request

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) request an increase of \$93,209 and 0.3 FTE in FY 2021-22 and \$426,921 and 3.0 FTE in FY 2022-23 from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund. The request is for the personnel and operating resources required to support initial public access for the newest state park at Sweetwater Lake in 2022. Sweetwater Lake is poised to become another iconic destination in Colorado's impressive state park portfolio, providing additional high-mountain recreational opportunities along the I-70 corridor and reducing the strain on other parks and recreation areas. The partnership for the park represents the first of its kind, as the Sweetwater Lake property is a unique combination of federal National Forest system lands and state park management that will expand public access for recreation in support of CPW's Wildly Important Goal to balance outdoor recreation and conservation. This request also includes spending authority for temporary staffing, property maintenance and supplies, utilities, mileage, and fleet vehicles. The request will increase to \$535,218 and 3.0 FTE in FY 2023-24, and ongoing.

Current Program

Colorado is legendary for its outdoor recreation and state parks provide an important gateway for Colorado citizens and visitors to experience the outdoors in a safe, family-friendly environment. The state parks system began with Cherry Creek State Park as the first designated state park in Colorado, created in 1959. However, maintenance and capacity improvements have not kept up with growth in demand, compromising the user experience at Colorado state parks. Visitation at state parks has increased steadily over the last three years, with a net increase of more than 4.5 million visitor days, a 31% increase, from FY 2018-19 through FY 2020-21. To help expand recreational opportunities in Colorado and reduce stresses caused by increased visitation throughout Colorado's state park system, Governor Jared Polis designated Fishers Peak to be opened as Colorado's 42nd state park in September 2019, and the park opened to the public on October 30, 2020. CPW is in the process of opening its 43rd state park at Sweetwater Lake, expanding the state parks system to encompass more than 239,000 acres.

On October 20, 2021, Governor Jared Polis announced a partnership between CPW, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS, White River National Forest), and Eagle Valley Land Trust (EVLTL) to create Colorado's 43rd state park at Sweetwater Lake in Garfield County. The USFS acquired the 488-acre Sweetwater Ranch, including the 77-acre lake, in August 2021 through a federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) purchase. The site has high potential to provide modern, quality public recreation opportunities without diminishing the cultural, scenic, and natural resource attributes of the area. The combination of the formerly private land and surrounding National Forest system lands under federal ownership, managed as a state park, has never been done before and allows for exciting new recreational opportunities in this part of Colorado.

The unique, first-of-its-kind partnership between CPW and USFS combines the expertise of the agencies to allow efficient and effective planning, redeveloping and managing of the site into the future. The partners are now working together to develop a long-term management plan to improve recreational facilities and maintain the unique character of the area. This partnership allows the USFS to incorporate local expertise of the EVLT and the recreation management and wildlife expertise of CPW to best serve visitors to the park. The partners are working together on a permit to allow CPW to operate the park, and both CPW and USFS have plans to contribute funding towards infrastructure and real property maintenance projects on the property. With support from The Conservation Fund, EVLT also has established a \$1.1 million Stewardship and Equity Fund to support conservation of the site and to fund projects that reduce barriers for underserved youth and families to visit Sweetwater Lake.

The acquisition of the property significantly increases existing public access to the area, although very little infrastructure is currently in place to facilitate recreation. Improved facilities, including a new boat dock, will be available to the public in 2022.

Additional buildout will follow the completion of a long-term plan, in consultation with the public, for expanding and managing the recreational opportunities at Sweetwater Lake while preserving the unique, relatively undeveloped nature of the property.



Problem or Opportunity

As a high-mountain location, the new state park at Sweetwater Lake will provide increased recreational opportunities for Colorado residents and tourists from around the world, while addressing capacity limitations at other parks. Staffing and operating resources will be required to provide safe recreational opportunities at the park. As the park amenities open, increased visitation will help support the economy of the surrounding area, reach new customers who are unfamiliar with Colorado's state parks, and provide new experiences for CPW's existing customers.

CPW has committed \$10 million in funding for capital infrastructure and development from funds appropriated in H.B. 21-1326, which will be matched with funding from USFS, but does not have spending authority for staffing and operating costs at Sweetwater Lake. During the planning and development phase, the park needs dedicated FTE, operational funds, and vehicle resources to prepare for opening. CPW

regional staff are currently overseeing planning and development of the state park at Sweetwater Lake and are being pulled away from existing duties to complete this important, time-sensitive and time-consuming work to formally establish and operate the partnership. The partnership requires permits and agreements for how the park will operate. Completing these agreements requires making important decisions about roles and responsibilities and is staff- and labor-intensive.

CPW has learned from experience that opening a new state park requires dedicated staff and reassigning current staff to the new park is unsustainable. CPW staff are already at capacity and do not have the bandwidth to take on a project of this magnitude without jeopardizing other work. Pulling staff from other parks or adding to current staff duties leads to staff burnout and risks the safety of visitors at the park they have left short-staffed. It would negatively impact recreational opportunities and customer service at those other parks as well. Additionally, the nearest state park is a 90-minute drive from Sweetwater Lake so it would be an even greater burden to try and implement that model in this instance.

CPW anticipates that the state park facilities at the Sweetwater Lake property will begin to open to public access in 2022. Dedicated staff and operating funds will ensure the park is safe for the public and there is the necessary level of property oversight, management, and maintenance. The Sweetwater partnership is even more complex than a typical park opening, requiring coordination with USFS on securing the permit to allow CPW to operate the park and strong communication to ensure development projects are underway and amenities are available for public access in 2022.

Although the full scope of recreational opportunities at Sweetwater Lake has yet to be determined, CPW anticipates offering many traditional activities such as fishing, non-motorized boating, paddleboarding, swimming, picnicking, hiking, cross country skiing, geocaching, horseback riding, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and camping. Adjacent public lands will provide additional land and wildlife conservation opportunities and public hunting access. A master planning process that will guide the future development of the park will soon be underway, involving community stakeholders and additional project partners including Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). However, because the property is owned by the USFS, this process will occur with public access to the park already available, highlighting the need for immediate management by CPW staff.

CPW was specifically targeted to be a partner in the recreation management at Sweetwater Lake because of its reputation for managing quality recreation properties. The recreation planning process is resource intensive and requires CPW staff to be intimately involved in the details and stakeholder process in order to oversee the project and ensure this jointly managed property has characteristics consistent with Colorado State Parks standards. Without the addition of the requested staff, the new state park is in jeopardy of not operating with the high level of customer service that CPW is known for, and the state's visitors have come to expect.

Proposed Solution

To secure the required staff and operating resources to support the development and initial public opening of Colorado's 43rd state park at Sweetwater Lake, CPW requests an increase of \$93,209 cash funds and 0.3 FTE in FY 2021-22, \$426,921 cash funds and 3.0 FTE in FY 2022-23, and \$535,218 cash funds and 3.0 FTE in FY 2023-24 and ongoing. Costs will be supported by revenue from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund. CPW has determined that it requires a minimum of 3.0 FTE, plus operating costs, to open new state parks, with adjustments for different needs based on each park's unique amenities, location, and size. The current request includes staff, vehicles, and operational funding and is consistent with previous staffing requests for the opening of new state parks, including the approved FY 2021-22 request for staff and operating to open Fishers Peak State Park (FY 2021-22, R-02). The operating costs for Sweetwater Lake are more comparable to other lake-based parks and will be higher than the current costs at Fishers Peak because of the many available recreational opportunities.

PARK PERMANENT STAFF: Beginning in March 2022, CPW requests the addition of one staff member dedicated to Sweetwater Lake at the Park Manager V classification. Due to the mid-year start, this position will only be 0.3 FTE in FY 2021-22 and will increase to 1.0 FTE in FY 2022-23. CPW needs a Park Manager dedicated to Sweetwater Lake as soon as possible to manage the project and planning process with the partners and stakeholders, and to develop and implement a park management plan. Existing staff have been covering these job duties and have been pulled away from equally important work to ensure that the partnership can be formed and that CPW is represented in all discussions and decisions.

CPW requests an additional 2.0 FTE dedicated to Sweetwater Lake starting in FY 2022-23 and ongoing, including 1.0 FTE at the Park Manager III classification serving as a Senior Ranger and 1.0 FTE at the Technician IV classification serving as a Park Resource Technician. The division cannot maintain CPW's current standards of customer service and public safety without adding the proposed dedicated FTE resources to the park.

More details about the work of these three positions are included on the following pages.

Park Managers: Commonly referred to as park rangers, park managers fulfill a variety of crucial roles in the overall management of the park and are the first point of contact for most incidents. A Park Manager has to be available at all times when a park is open. Even when a new park opens with more limited recreational opportunities, or operations are not at 100%, at least two park managers are needed to cover the hours in the week so that a staff member is available at all times when the public is on site. Park Managers are essential in responding to customer needs at the park, responding to emergency situations and injuries that occur, making sure that visitors follow park rules and are respectful of other visitors, and help to make sure that park infrastructure is

safe and functioning properly. These positions will not only serve to handle these situations but will also be tasked with managing temporary employees, managing daily customer service, managing the parks revenue section, and running the operations of the visitors service center. The positions will also coordinate with numerous businesses and operations outside of the park to continue relations within the community. Without sufficient FTE support, Sweetwater Lake will not be able to provide adequate visitor services, safety, and enforcement. Park Managers go through the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification process and serve as law enforcement officers for CPW.

Park Resource Technician (PRT): PRTs manage park infrastructure and will be an invaluable asset to assist with the necessary maintenance and improvements required for a new park. They provide a safe and pleasant environment for recreational activities by cleaning, repairing, and replacing operating equipment, systems, grounds, maintaining facilities, and park infrastructure. PRTs are responsible for providing services, maintenance functions, natural resource protection, natural resource education, administrative functions, interagency cooperation, and assisting with statewide programs.

PARK OPERATING EXPENDITURES: CPW expects significant construction projects being managed by staff at the park in FY 2022-23. Infrastructure development, such as campgrounds, roads, trails, vault toilets, entrance station, visitor services, day use and overnight parking, maintenance shop, water treatment facility and storage yard will take several years to be completed at the park, therefore park operations will ramp up over the next three fiscal years, through FY 2023-24. Operating costs are estimated at \$250,895 annually, but have been pro-rated in FY 2021-22 (15%) and FY 2022-23 (50%). Although the park will be open and staff will be required to serve the public and maintain the property from day one, it is expected that overnight camping and other recreational opportunities will be phased in as the partners complete the master plan in collaboration with the public and construction projects are completed. These costs will increase as facilities and amenities are added, including the addition of overnight camping, and visitor capacity increases.

In addition to staffing costs outlined above, full operating expenditures (\$250,895) are needed beginning in FY 2023-24 when the park is operating at or near full capacity and temporary staffing is also at full capacity, as detailed below:

- *Temporary staff, \$133,606*: Temporary staff support is vital to the operations of most state parks, including oversight of the land-based activities that all parks have. Parks with lake access, including swimming, paddle boarding and kayaking, require higher levels of staffing during peak seasons than non-water based parks to ensure visitor safety. For example, staff regularly check for valid fishing licenses and ensure visitors are following other rules and regulations on and around the water, such as wearing U.S. Coast Guard-approved, proper fitting, and serviceable life jackets, or not operating