



Talking and Writing About Great Outdoors Colorado

Short general description

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) invests a portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds to help preserve and enhance the state’s parks, trails, wildlife, rivers, and open spaces. GOCO’s independent board awards competitive grants to local governments and land trusts, and makes investments through Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Created when voters approved a Constitutional Amendment in 1992, GOCO has since funded more than 4,800 projects in urban and rural areas in all 64 counties without any tax dollar support. For more information, visit GOCO.org.

Key terms: invests, portion of proceeds, independent board, competitive grants

Talking points

When speaking about GOCO, emphasize these themes:

- GOCO preserves and enhances our parks, trails, rivers, wildlife, and open spaces so people can enjoy them now and pass them on intact to future generations.
- GOCO creates places where children can safely run, play, and experience nature.
- GOCO enhances Coloradans’ quality of life by helping ensure that our neighborhoods have parks, trails, and recreational opportunities; wildlife thrives; and our state’s natural beauty is preserved.
- GOCO preserves some of the state’s most spectacular scenic, historic, natural, and cultural sites.
- GOCO invests a portion of Colorado Lottery revenues and is not tax supported. Lottery revenues also go to the Conservation Trust Fund, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and school construction.
- GOCO has funded competitive grants for more than 4,800 projects in all 64 counties at both urban and rural sites.
- GOCO is overseen by an independent board that approves the distribution of funds to local governments and land trusts.
- GOCO’s work benefits the people of Colorado by enhancing the state’s economy, and by helping improve our health through recreation and protected land and waterways.

Recommended words and phrasing

Use first-person and first-person-plural pronouns “we” and “our” as appropriate.

When discussing Lottery funding, always note that GOCO receives a portion, not all, of Lottery’s revenues. Saying “GOCO receives Lottery revenues” creates the perception that GOCO receives all



Lottery funding, which is not true. Say GOCO is “investing” lottery proceeds, not “spending” or “using” them.

When discussing GOCO’s projects, always note that GOCO has supported projects “in all 64 counties” so people understand that both urban areas and rural and smaller communities benefit.

Note that GOCO grants reimburse local governments that control the spending and management of projects. GOCO-funded programs are not managed from GOCO’s Denver office.

Emphasize that GOCO’s work benefits “future generations.” As the state experiences significant population growth that impacts local communities and infrastructure, Coloradoans want to ensure the great outdoors are here for their children and grandchildren to enjoy as they do now. GOCO funds youth programs, including Colorado Youth Corps Association, as well as outdoor education that will encourage a lifelong interest in the outdoors and create the next generation of land stewards.

When discussing conservation of agricultural lands, say GOCO is helping “working farms and ranches” so people understand these lands are not idled when under a conservation easement. Keeping large ranches from being subdivided is beneficial to wildlife as it means that larger, undisturbed habitat areas are conserved and fewer fences that hinder migration are built.

When discussing parks, trails, open spaces, and rivers, emphasize the uses and list them: biking, hiking, walking, running, rafting, fishing, boating, camping, celebrating, etc. Note that 8 out of 10 Coloradans use trails, and state parks generate billions of dollars in economic activity.

When discussing wildlife, talk about how preserving habitats benefits the wildlife and people, such as those who engage in birding, nature viewing, hunting, and fishing. Avoid jargon such as “biodiversity” and “ecosystems.”

Colorado is projected to gain nearly a million more people every decade for the next 30 years. When discussing growth, note the importance of conserving open space between communities, providing enough trails and parks so people can “get away” and find “peace.”

If asked about education funding, note that GOCO helps schools create playgrounds and outdoor education spaces that promote a variety of healthy activities, including sports and gardening. GOCO’s budget of ~\$64 million is a small fraction compared to the statewide education budget of [\\$6.3 billion](#). In addition, a portion of lottery funds are allocated toward the K-12 capital improvement program called BEST.

When discussing Colorado Lottery, note that 44 states have lotteries, many of which rely on their revenue for basic government services, like education, prisons, and senior services. Colorado is unique in not relying on lottery revenues for these types of basic services and for investing such a large proportion of lottery proceeds in long-term conservation and recreation programs.



| Words and Terms to Avoid | Words and Terms to Use Instead |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Environment | Land, air, and water |
| Ecosystems | Natural areas |
| Biodiversity/endangered species | Fish and wildlife |
| Regulations | Safeguards/protections |
| Riparian | Land along lakes, rivers, and streams |
| Aquifer | Groundwater |
| Watershed | Land around rivers, lakes, and streams |
| Environmental groups | Conservation groups/organizations protecting land, air, and water |
| Agricultural land | Working farms and ranches |
| Urban sprawl | Poorly planned growth/development |
| Green jobs | Clean energy jobs, jobs protecting water quality, etc. |
| Ecosystem services | Nature's benefits |
| Landscape-scale conservation | Large, connected natural areas |

Source: Lori Wiegel, Partner, [Public Opinion Strategies](#)

Elevator pitch

Colorado is the only state that dedicates its lottery revenues fully to the great outdoors. The organization Great Outdoors Colorado, or GOCO, receives about half of Colorado Lottery proceeds and invests them in outdoor recreation projects and land conservation efforts through a competitive grant process. GOCO grants help build parks and trails, protect wildlife and open space, and invest millions in our state parks system.