

14ERS CENTENNIAL VISIONING Report Card

June 2023

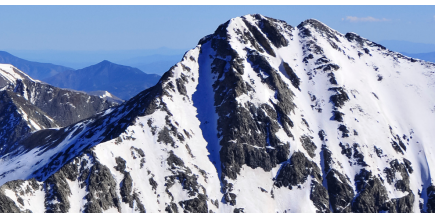


VISION: Preserve and protect Colorado's iconic wildlife, waters, and diverse mountain environments

D

Land managers, wildlife professionals and visitors perceive that the health of natural resources on 14ers is declining with cumulative impacts from high use. Land managers are in agreement that conditions on 14ers in Wilderness Areas are not in compliance with federal standards. Biologists outline concerns over impact to wildlife due to people and dogs straying further off of trails, which can cause displacement and indirect habitat loss. Increasing levels of trash and human waste, as well as denudation of vegetation from expanding social trails and campsites, was noted by everyone surveyed as a factor contributing to natural resource degradation. A bright spot is the work by Colorado Fourteeners Initiative (CFI) and Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI) to convert user-created 14er trails to sustainable designed trails.

Indicator	Information Source	5 Year Trend	Comments	
Camping Impact	District Ranger Perception Survey: Campsite footprint trend	90% say footprint is increasing, 10% unchanged	This metric is informed by the District Ranger Survey with responses from 10 U.S. Forest Service Rangers managing 14ers. 9 of 10 say the footprint of 14er-related campsites is increasing. One example is along the route to Mt Columbia/Harvard, where 77 documented Wilderness campsites include denuded ground, more than 200 damaged <i>krummholz</i> fir trees, and nearly 100 campfire rings.	D
Human & Dog Waste	District Ranger Perception Survey: Human/dog waste trend	90% say increasing or greatly increasing, 10% don't know	This metric is informed by the District Ranger Survey. 90% indicate that the volume of human and dog waste on 14ers is increasing. This is consistent with the perception of visitors captured in the Colorado 14er Survey. Hard data on the volume and trend of waste is not available, although a pilot project is planned to gather such data in the Collegiate Peaks.	F
Wilderness Standard Compliance	District Ranger Data: Wilderness Act compliance where appropriate	100% of Districts with Wilderness peaks not in compliance. Trend worsening for 87%	Wilderness Area management includes particular requirements, making these lands different than other federally designated landscapes. According to the Wilderness Act, wilderness is recognized as an area "where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man" and is an area "retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation." In the District Ranger Survey, all District Rangers managing lands with 14ers in Wilderness Areas indicate that conditions are not in compliance with the Act, and 87% say the trend is worsening.	F
	CFI data: Trend in oversize groups on Wilderness 14er routes	238% increase	CFI data shows an increase in the number of oversized groups observed in Wilderness Areas by Trail Stewards. Group limits in Wilderness Areas are provided to help protect solitude and natural resources.	
Natural Resource Health Perception	State 14er Survey: Visitor perception of natural resource health	52% declined/greatly declined, 8% improved, 19% no change, 22% unsure	This metric is informed by the Colorado 14er Survey with 1,200 respondents, and it measures visitor perception of how natural resource health is trending. A majority (52%) of survey respondents say that resource health is declining, while 8% see improvement. Top perceived impacts are denudation of vegetation related to off-trail use and prevalence of trash and human waste.	D
Conversion of Social to Sustainably Designed Trails	CFI and RMFI Data: Change in the number of sustainably designed 14er trails	35 sustainably designed trails in 2018 increased to 41 in 2022 (+6)	CFI and RMFI data show upgrades to 6 user-created routes with sustainably designed trails since 2018. This work decreases natural resource impacts from erosion and vegetation damage related to multiple trails.	A
Wildlife Impact	Wildlife Professionals Survey: Trend in impact to wildlife	94% say greatly/somewhat increased, 6% somewhat improved	This metric is informed by the Wildlife Professionals Survey with responses from 17 state wildlife professionals charged with managing wildlife populations, including in areas with 14ers. 16 of 17 respondents say the impact of 14er use on wildlife has increased since 2018, noting increased camping impact, trash, human waste, noise pollution, damage to alpine ecosystems, and dogs off leash. Biologists also note a trend in more people straying farther off trail, and express concern that wildlife avoidance of such areas results in displacement and indirect habitat loss. The metric was used as an estimate of wildlife trends due to limited 14er-specific habitat loss and condition data. CFI notes that in the past four years, work to upgrade 26 trails was approved and funded by Colorado Parks and Wildlife with no wildlife impact concerns raised.	F



14ERS CENTENNIAL VISIONING Report Card

June 2023

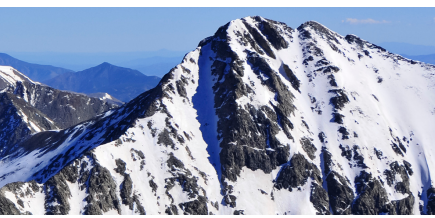


VISION: Provide equitable opportunities to responsibly explore Colorado's 14ers

C-

Although progress has been made in some areas, such as CFI and RMFI work to upgrade trails, the overall 14er experience for the majority of surveyed users is declining due to a loss of solitude caused by the number of people and exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure and declining user behavior quality.

Indicator	Information Source	5 Year Trend	Comments	
Experience Quality	State 14er Survey - Visitor Perception of experience quality	41% somewhat/greatly declined, 24% improved or greatly improved, 16% no change, 9% unsure	In the Colorado 14er Survey, roughly twice as many respondents feel that the quality of their experiences has degraded (41%), than feel like quality has improved (24%). The top reason is described as too many people resulting in a loss of solitude. Additional factors are cited as disruptive behaviors, such as using music speakers, leaving trash, and having dogs off leash. Survey comments suggest that experienced visitors are moving to use 13ers to avoid the crowds. For those that indicate their experiences have improved, top reasons include improved personal skills, the availability of 14er route and access information, and improved trails.	C
Parking, Restrooms, and Trail Infrastructure	District Ranger Perception: Existing parking conditions trend	50% greatly/somewhat declined, 20% no change, 30% somewhat/greatly improved (C)	In the District Ranger Survey, half say parking conditions on 14ers have declined since 2018, while 30% say they have improved. Declining condition may be due to resource damage plus safety issues related to parking along roadsides or off roads. Improving conditions may reflect projects to increase appropriate parking or to enforce parking limits.	C
	District Ranger Perception - Funding sufficiency for parking solutions	Only 17% have sufficient funding for appropriate parking solutions. 69% of 14ers have access limited by parking availability. Safety is a concern (F)	Only 17% of surveyed District Rangers say they have sufficient funding to implement appropriate parking solutions, which may vary from enforcing parking limits to adding parking depending on the 14er. Rangers indicate that access on 69% of 14ers is limited by parking availability. Rangers also noted concerns about emergency vehicle access and vegetation damage due to inappropriate parking along roadsides.	
	District Ranger Perception: Existing restroom conditions trend	On condition: 30% greatly/somewhat declined, 40% no change, 10% improved, 20% no restrooms or unsure (C+)	Data from the District Ranger Survey shows a mix of restroom conditions that have declined, stayed the same and improved depending on location.	
	District Ranger Perception: Restroom capacity	80% say more restrooms are needed. 49% of 14er trailheads have sufficient restroom capacity. 37% of 14er trailheads lack toilets (F)	80% of District Rangers surveyed indicate more restrooms are needed. Rangers estimate that about half of 14er trailheads have adequate restroom capacity. CFI data agree, and indicate that 37% of primary 14er trailheads lack toilets. These trailheads saw 49,000-78,000 hiker days in 2021. Further, 77% of secondary 14er trailheads do not have toilets. Many of these primary and secondary trailheads are commonly used to camp after long drives or before setting out to hike the peak.	
	CFI Data: Average Statewide Trail Condition	Average grade is a C (C+)	The metric is informed by the CFI statewide trail condition grades and reflects average condition.	
	Trails Condition Trend: 2015, 2019 and 2023 CFI Conditions Report Card	16% increase in routes at/above goal (Grades A-B). Trails projects supported by CPW (A)	A positive trend is apparent in work to convert user-created routes to sustainably designed trails. CFI data show that routes have improved as follows: 2015 - routes at goal (A-B) = 31% and routes below goal (C-F) = 69%; 2019 - routes at goal (A-B) = 43% and routes below goal (C-F) = 57%; 2023 - routes at goal (A-B) = 47% and routes below goal (C-F) = 53%. Major route improvements include Mount Columbia, East Elbert, Grays/Torreys, Quandary, Bierstadt, and Holy Cross.	



14ERS CENTENNIAL VISIONING Report Card

June 2023

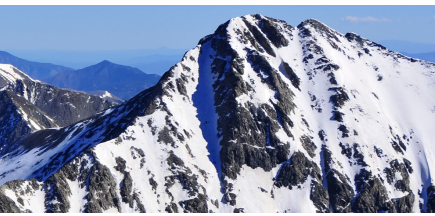


VISION: Provide equitable opportunities to responsibly explore Colorado's 14ers

C-

Although progress has been made in some areas, such as CFI and RMFI work to upgrade trails, the overall 14er experience for the majority of surveyed users is declining due to a loss of solitude caused by the number of people and exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure and declining user behavior quality.

Indicator	Information Source	5 Year Trend	Comments	
14er Funding	<p>CFI Data: Total 14er Funding Trend</p> <p>Core team analysis: Total 14er funding need vs current funding</p>	<p>Funding from all sources for 14ers has increased by 50% since 2018 (A)</p> <p>Funding remains far short of what is needed to upgrade infrastructure for current use levels and manage user impacts (D)</p>	<p>Total funding per visitor ranged from \$7 to \$11 per visit over the past 5 years. Current total funds are lower than what is needed to provide the infrastructure, enforcement and systems to manage the level of use while managing or slowing impact.</p> <p>Funding for 14ers has exceeded \$2 million annually over the past five years. Giving slipped by more than 10% from 2018 through 2021, but rebounded strongly in 2022, such that giving for 14ers was up 50% over the five-year period. Giving by individual 14er enthusiasts (and Foundations controlled by individuals) has more than doubled over the past five years, exceeding \$1 million in 2022. Individual donations have consistently been the top funding source for 14er stewardship work in recent years. However, on a per-climber basis, individual gifts average only \$3.37 per visitor. Giving from Foundations (other than National Forest Foundation) for trail work has been flat over the past five years, and contributes a third of individual giving. The NFF's multi-year "Find Your Fourteener" campaign increased revenues for trail work over the past six years, but has dropped off in the last two years. Most funds for stewardship work come from the Colorado State Trails competitive grants, which are capped at \$250,000 per organization per grant cycle for construction and maintenance work and which are increasingly competitive with other state trails needs. Baseline federal funding for the Colorado 14ers Program and its partners (CFI/RMFI/youth corps/volunteer groups) has been flat or declining for many years. The Great American Outdoors Act in 2020 created a new funding stream for deferred maintenance projects. Colorado 14er trail projects began receiving significant funds in 2022 and an additional \$1.3 million will run through at least 2025 and possibly longer if the program is reauthorized. Depending on the project and area of the state in which it occurs, corporations and local governments can add to funding. However, funding is variable from year to year.</p> <p>While overall funding has increased, professional judgement indicates that total funding remains far short of what is needed to upgrade infrastructure such as parking, routes and restrooms to be sufficient for current use, and to manage issues such as trash and human waste with increased enforcement, engineering and education. CFI indicates that, while progress on trail upgrades has been strong, the remaining needs for trail upgrades are increasingly complex and expensive. The District Rangers Survey highlights a lack of sufficient funding for parking, restrooms, waste management and to resolve community-raised concerns. While individual giving has increased, the average contribution per 14er visitor is less than \$4 per year – well short of the cost incurred by each visitor. Per-user funding is also low compared to other user group fees, such as a Colorado Fishing License (\$40 to \$111 in/out of state) or OHV sticker (\$25), and compared to an expressed willingness to pay an average of \$75 per visitor, indicated by the State 14er Survey. Additional work is in progress to understand full funding needs as part of the 14er Visioning Project.</p>	C
Safe Behaviors	CFI/SAR Data: General incident analysis trend	See comment section	<p>Search and Rescue teams do not record data in a way that allows for easily assessing incident trends on the 14ers. Anecdotally, SAR teams are responding to more call-outs for younger participants, often new to Colorado, without significant mountain experience or carrying recommended safety equipment. Virtually all 14er fatalities occur on a handful of technically challenging peaks – Longs, Maroon Bells, Capitol, Crestone Needle and Challenger/Kit Carson – where complex route finding, loose rock and steep terrain combine to punish small mistakes by even experienced climbers. Many recent fatalities highlight that hiking experience gained on the majority of easy to moderate 14ers does not build the required skills for the most challenging peaks.</p>	D
Access Equity	Core Team Perception Survey - Trend in number of programs supporting underserved populations to get outside	40% are not aware of such programs, 60% say the number of programs has increased	<p>Limited data on 14er visitor demographics, via an online survey of 1,000 CFI social media and 14ers.com followers, suggests that the majority of 14er users are male (68%) and white (90%). The population on 14ers is not a close match for the gender or racial diversity of the state. As a positive early indicator, the Core Team Survey completed by stakeholders helping to guide the 14er Visioning Project suggests there is a growing number of programs that aim to engage diverse populations. This vision remains challenged, but may be starting to trend in a positive direction.</p>	C



14ERS CENTENNIAL VISIONING Report Card

June 2023

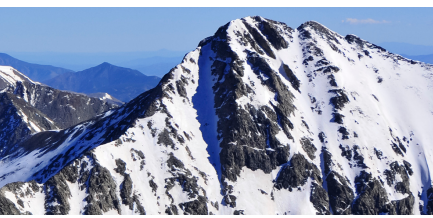


VISION: Provide equitable opportunities to responsibly explore Colorado's 14ers

C-

Although progress has been made in some areas, such as CFI and RMFI work to upgrade trails, the overall 14er experience for the majority of surveyed users is declining due to a loss of solitude caused by the number of people and exacerbated by insufficient infrastructure and declining user behavior quality.

Indicator	Information Source	5 Year Trend	Comments	
Responsible Behaviors	CFI Data: Number off dogs off leash per visitor	19% decrease (A)	The majority of measures for responsible user behaviors have sharply declined since 2018. This includes increasing reports of campfire issues, leaving trash, being generally unprepared and not obeying Wilderness Area rules such as group size. CFI professionals perceive that an increasing proportion of users have less outdoor experience. Behaviors appear to have improved in a few specific areas (keeping dogs on leash and not cutting trails), and CFI staff suggest this improvement may be related to better trail engineering (making it difficult to cut trail corners) and personalized education campaigns.	D
	CFI Data: Number off trail cutters per visitor	17% decrease (A)		
	CFI data: Trend in oversize groups on Wilderness 14er routes per visitor	238% increase (F)		
	CFI data: Increase in camp fire issues per visitor	1225% increase (F)		
	CFI Data: Number of litterers per visitor	833% increase (F)		
	CFI Data: Number of unprepared hikers per visitor	62% increase (F)		



14ERS CENTENNIAL VISIONING Report Card

June 2023



VISION: Support mutually beneficial relationships between visitors and communities

D

Data related to this vision is limited, which may contribute to the overall grade reflecting a high level of concern.

Indicator	Information Source	5 Year Trend	Comments	
Total Funding Available vs. Need	Core team analysis: Total 14er Need vs Current Funding	See comment section	This metric is the same as 14er Funding indicator listed above, and is included in this section to note that a lack of funding may result in strained relationships with local communities, who may feel that the cost to address issues is greater than the local economic benefit.	D
State Economic Benefit	CFI data: Survey from a CSU study on state economic benefit from 14er visitors	Economic impact ties to visitor numbers and is stable at \$80 to 110M / year benefit	Based on a 2009 study by Colorado State University completed in Colorado, 14er visitors provide roughly \$80 to \$110M total annual benefit to the state.	B
Resources For Community Concerns	District Ranger Data: Availability of resources to address community concerns	100% disagree/strongly disagree that resources are available to address community concerns	In the District Ranger Survey, all Rangers indicate that funding to address 14er issues raised by local communities, such as overflowing and illegal parking, human waste and trash accumulation and impacts from camping, are insufficient. Moves by local agencies or communities to limit use or consider to limit use on 14ers are increasing. The Colorado 14er Survey reflects a lack of awareness about the needs of or impacts to local communities by 14er visitors, with only 11% of respondents saying that healthy and sustainable host communities are important to them.	F
Local Business Patronization Programs	Core Team Perception - Survey	60% are unaware of such programs, 40% say they are somewhat increased	The Core Team Survey indicates that, while some perceive that programs to help 14er visitors support local economies are increasing (such as encouragement to patronize local businesses), the majority (60%) are unaware of such programs. This metric is tentatively graded as a D, due to limited survey responses.	D