

HUNTER OUTREACH PROGRAM
YOUTH OUTREACH AND WOMEN AFIELD
REPORT



OUTREACH PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COLORADO INITIATIVES

PROGRAM STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

This report explains the Colorado Division of Wildlife outreach efforts with regard to hunter recruitment and retention. It examines the success of a collective effort by the Division, landowners, sportsman's organizations and national partners in improving the current and future hunter recruitment efforts in Colorado.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 1. General.** The mission of the Colorado Division of Wildlife Hunter Outreach Program is to recruit and retain current and future generations of hunters in Colorado by developing a **system of programs** that implement the **Division of Wildlife Strategic Plan**, enhances hunter skills and opportunities throughout the state and **cultivates an informed consent** of hunting by the general public.
- 2. Need.** The number of active hunters in the state of Colorado and nationally, has shown a significant decline since 1996. This decline is reflective of the national statistics that indicate per capita number of hunters is declining across the United States. The CDOW receives 67 percent of its financial support from the sale of licenses. A continued decline in license sales will have a negative impact on the Division's ability to fund wildlife management programs. The good news is the Division has taken steps to reverse the decline in hunters and made a long-term commitment to regaining a stable population of hunters in the state. This aggressive approach to hunter retention and recruitment will take financial support from external organizations and a commitment by our many partners to providing an innovative approach to our recruitment plan.



- 3. Our Vision.** In 2002, the Colorado Division of Wildlife embraced the future of hunting



in Colorado by creating a staff position for the Hunter Outreach Coordinator. This position was tasked to design and support programs that would focus on a statewide set of objectives to improve retention of current hunters and recruit new hunters from all segments of the population. The results of this program are future based, establishing a foundation for growth to sustain our hunting population, improving hunter education and behavior and serving as a national model for partnerships with other conservation, corporate and sportsman's organizations. Our approach to providing unique hunting and shooting opportunities to the Colorado public, thereby encouraging them to continue their hunting and shooting interests in the future requires additional funds that are not available through Division funding alone. External partners and a large corps of trained volunteers must support this objective. The future benefit of meeting our objectives is reflected in increased public participation in hunting and shooting activities and a resulting increase in overall license sales for the state.

4. Approach. The statewide design demands a decentralized approach to implementation of the program objectives. Colorado developed the Partners in the Field program to afford a variety of partners with the opportunity to contribute their unique talents to this effort. The Partners in the Field program seeks to maximize the unique contributions of volunteers, landowners, businesses, conservation organizations and communities in a directed effort to support the growth of hunting and shooting sports in Colorado. Through this umbrella program, support of regional and statewide initiatives of our outreach effort is possible. The program has established four areas of concentration: Heritage, Opportunity, Mentorship and Education (HOME). These four areas are linked together as a synergistic effort to accomplish our statewide mission. We will discuss each program area separately.

- **Heritage:** The link to our past as Americans has slowly eroded with the change of population centers to a more urban demography. Family units have changed over the past decade to a prevalence of single parent families, dispersal of family groups and less recreational time due to increased income requirements and changes in family priorities. Our

focus on our heritage as hunters is meant to remind the Colorado public of her roots and the potential benefits of continuing our hunting heritage for future generations. Through the efforts of the Division Public Affairs section and our other partners, we seek to provide print media to inform the public of the strong ties to hunting and fishing found in many facets of our state history.

- **Opportunity:** Colorado has vast resources of public land to support our hunting public. The Division manages over 300 state wildlife areas and provides access to state trust lands. Hunting opportunity on SWA's , state/national forests and BLM lands combine to make over 9200 square miles of land accessible to the public. The Walk-in Access Program and Big Game Access Program provide hunting opportunities on private lands in various areas of the state. The Hunter Outreach Program also works with private landowners to provide hunts for youth and women on their land as a part of our educational outreach effort by providing mentors on hunts organized and run through the program.
- **Mentorship:** Access to hunting areas is only a portion of the overall effort to recruit and teach the next generation of hunters. In many cases, people are interested in hunting but do not have the background, education or skill to take to the field on their own. The Division of Wildlife Hunter Outreach Program has developed training programs to meet the need for skilled mentors in the field. Our mentorship program has two distinct facets. First, we train citizen volunteers as certified Huntmasters. Huntmasters attend a formal course of instruction provided by the Division of Wildlife, then upon graduation are charged with planning, coordinating and running youth and novice hunts throughout the state. The Huntmaster teams are responsible for all elements of the hunt from safety, to education, to cultivating participation by landowners in their regional areas. Secondly, we

provide training to other organizations in an effort to provide them with a program model which can assist them in providing outreach efforts on their own and expanding our overall ability to meet the public need for an expanded mentor base in Colorado.

- **Education**. The fourth and final area of program focus is on education. As a wildlife agency, we believe through a dynamic public education program, we can make positive changes in the public's approach to hunting in our state. Across the state, Regional Managers are providing educational seminars for hunters and the general public. Our hunter skill seminars provide quality instruction on "how to hunt" a variety of species of game animals across the state. Qualified instructors and state biologists provide hunting seminars on elk, deer, grouse, pheasant and waterfowl to attendees. Our skill clinics are designed to be a hands-on application for the attendees.



From youth duck calling clinics to shooting clinics, participants have the opportunity to actively participate in hands-on skills under the watchful eye of a qualified instructor. Participants gain skills, confidence and a foundation for future education. Our wing shooting program is designed to provide the opportunity for interested participants to gain basic shotgunning skills and nurture an interest in the shooting sports. The Division has fielded a shooting trailer to each regional area of the state. The trailer has all of the equipment necessary to establish and run shooting clinics at state wildlife areas, private land or at volunteer shooting clubs throughout the state.

Growing to meet the public desire for education in hunting and shooting skills, the CDOW provides clinics and seminars across the state. Skill

seminars about elk, waterfowl, upland bird and turkey hunting continue to draw record numbers of participants. The seminars are designed to educate the hunter about the specific game species they pursued, by understanding the biology, hunting techniques and specific wildlife regulations governing the management of the species. Several of our seminars, Sheep and Goat, Turkey and Elk draw over 100 participants per seminar. Our “hands-on” clinics allowed participants to gain experience in shooting, waterfowl calling and turkey hunting skills. Women Afield wing shooting clinics and youth waterfowl calling clinics targets the growing interest in hunting and shooting by our nontraditional participants.

- 5. Colorado Archery in the Schools Program.** The Colorado Archery in the Schools Program (CASP) was developed to provide a positive partnership between the Colorado Department of Education, the public and private schools system and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Based on the National Archery in the Schools Program, CASP provides physical education teachers with a basic training program to teach target archery in the public schools using a two week structured curriculum. The program is designed to allow teachers to incorporate life skills education in their physical education programs and interest them in life skills that may be carried into their adult lives.
- 6. Women Afield.** The Women Afield program was begun in 2006 and has become a strong component of our outreach efforts. We provide women with opportunities to hunt big game, upland birds, turkey and waterfowl in all areas of the state. Regional education coordinators provide summer and fall clinics in shooting and fishing for our Women Afield participants. Events such as “Bang and Twang” (shotgun skills and archery skills in a one day clinic) and “Cast and Blast” (shotgun skills and fishing education in a one day clinic), seek to provide women with the necessary skills to participate and enjoy their outdoor adventures. Huntmasters serve as guides and hunt organizers in the

same manner in which they do for youth hunts. Women Afield is focused on the shooting sports, hunting and fishing activities for women.

- 7. Our commitment: *We are committed to providing the citizens of Colorado with a dynamic program that meets the needs of our future hunters and helps to preserve our hunting heritage.***

Program Imperatives

Any program, to become successful in the long-term must follow certain imperatives. If we deviate from these essential program elements, we risk losing credibility with the public we serve. The Hunter Outreach Program has five imperatives:

- ◆ Provide a safe, educational and memorable hunting experience for the novice and family.
- ◆ Maintain the highest professional and ethical standards in all that we do.
- ◆ Project a positive public image of hunters and hunting.
- ◆ Teach sound skills, values and responsibilities to all program participants.
- ◆ Promote wildlife conservation, management and enhancement through an experiential program.

These imperatives are the fundamental considerations for all activities provided by the Hunter Outreach Program and the Colorado Division of Wildlife. To accomplish the goals of the Program, we must understand and live these imperatives.

National research has identified barriers to hunting participation through a variety of studies. The change in demographics, family composition and public interests all contribute to the difficulty in recruitment and retention of hunters. There are five factors that are needed to build a long term recruitment and retention program:

**Five Factors in Building and Maintaining
Interest and Participation in Hunting**

- 1. "Threshold experience" - an upbeat introduction into hunting**
- 2. Access to the resource**
- 3. Access to equipment**
- 4. Access to information / mentors**
- 5. A positive social contact - support from family and peer groups**

The five factors listed above are the foundation of the Colorado Hunter Outreach Program and guide the decision making process for the program. Each of the five factors has a significant contribution to the overall success of a recruitment effort.

BARRIERS TO HUNTING

A variety of research has been done over recent years to determine barriers to participation in hunting. Much of the research indicates that while many factors may contribute to declining retention or recruitment efforts, several factors are identified as the most frequently encountered obstacles:

- Lack of time
- Lack of places to hunt
 - Difficulty in obtaining a license
- Lack of social support
- Lack of mentors

The Hunter Outreach program reviewed many of the potential barriers and sought ways to eliminate or reduce the factors which contributed to a decline in hunting participation by Colorado citizens.

COLORADO INITIATIVES

Active Outreach

- Over 1300 youth days in the field in 2007
 - 130 trained Huntmasters and volunteers
 - Mentored hunts for big game, upland bird, waterfowl and turkey
- Over 300 Women Afield participants in 2007
 - Shooting sports activities
 - Hunting opportunities for big game, upland bird, waterfowl and turkey
- Seminars provided statewide for most major game species

- Over 2000 people participated in Hunter Outreach seminars in 2007
 - 1106 staff hours spent in program activities
- 115 Certified teachers are trained in CASP from 85 schools statewide
 - Early 2007 survey results indicate over 10,000 students have participated in the archery curriculum this year
 - Program expansion is limited only by Coordinator time and funds
- Support for the Scholastic Clays Target Program
 - Support two teams in Colorado
 - Golden Gun Club Team (Golden Eagles) was 2007 state champions
 - Individual state and national awards gained by several Golden Eagle members.
- In 2007, Nearly 4000 volunteer hours were contributed by Huntmasters and Volunteers to support the Outreach Program.

Regulatory Outreach

- Youth age changed to include youth until age 18 in 2007.
 - This was a statutory change approved by the legislature and championed by the Division, the Sportsman's Advisory Group and other sportsman's organizations in an effort to retain youths aged 16 and 17 in hunting participation.
- Youth license cost reduced to \$1.00 small game and \$10.00 big game
 - This program allows youth hunters to participate in hunting at a nominal cost until their 18th birthday.
- Youth Outreach License program targets sportsman's groups to develop mentor programs.
 - A new program initiated in 2007 to provide organizations with a means of obtaining big game licenses when all other methods are expired to host youth hunting programs. The

program allows organizations to request up to five licenses for pronghorn antelope, elk, deer and turkey.

- Director's Dream Hunt allows specialty groups to mentor terminally ill youths in big game hunts in Colorado.
 - A new program was approved in 2007 to allow the Division of Wildlife to provide licenses to approved mentoring organizations that provide special hunting opportunities to terminally ill youth up to 21 years of age.
- Late season Youth Elk hunts allow youths to have multiple field opportunities
- Youth turkey seasons extended in the southwest portion of the state
- Big Game Access Program (BGAP) included over 65,000 acres in four different Game Management Units on seven participating ranches; for deer and pronghorn hunting. Permits for youth are free of charge to youth hunters. In 2007, 32 youth hunters participated in a pilot program with a forecast for increasing the number of participating ranches and youth hunters in future years. Information and maps are available at:
<http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/BigGame/Accessprogram/>

Passive Outreach

- Youth only State Wildlife Areas provide opportunity with less pressure
- National and State media coverage highlights positive aspects of the DOW Outreach effort
- National awards recognize program achievement (Boone and Crockett Award)

- Regular requests from other Wildlife agencies for program models and experience
 - New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Nebraska and Kansas
- Partnership with sportsman's organizations and conservation groups to provide model of outreach programs and encourage their outreach efforts

STATISTICAL REVIEW

The efforts of any program need to be measured or benchmarked by data collected from a variety of sources. Each year, the Hunter Outreach Program looks at license trends, program participation rates and program activity rates to measure the success of the program.

Program Participation

The program offers activities each year to provide a variety of educational experiences for participants. The Hunter Outreach Program provides seminars on hunting, skills clinics, hunting and shooting sports events and a number of mentored hunts in all areas of the state. The data below was collected from a new database program (the Education Database) which allows us to track program events in a central database.

Total number of reported participants	2035
Total number of hours reported	1106

License Sales

A trend analysis of license sales for youth and women is useful to determine the overall success of the regulatory and active outreach initiatives by the Division of Wildlife. The chart below provides a five year look at the sales numbers between 2003 and 2007. The Outreach program began offering program initiatives in 2003.

License Sales Combined

Year	Big Game Sales (Total)	Big Game Sales (Youth BG)	Big Game Sales (Women BG)	Small Game Sales (Youth SG)
2003	374,958	20,854	22,960	6,585 (Partial Year)
2004	381,520	20,993	23,096	11,823
2005	377,713	21,197	22,993	11,403
2006	373,836	21,565	22,892	10,972
2007	370,952	30,496	23,301	12,589

Figure 1

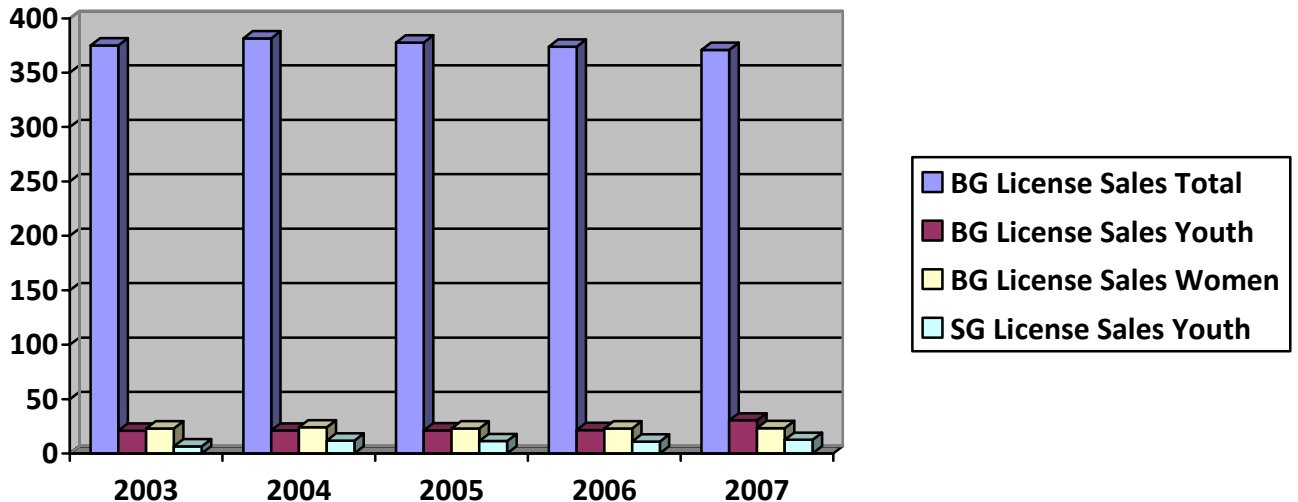


Figure 2

The chart above provides a graphical picture of the numerical data shown in Figure 1. Of note is that over the five year period of data gathered, the total license sales for big game have statistically remained steady. The youth and women sales have shown a slight growth over the five year period. The increase in youth license sales and a slight decrease in the overall big game license sales can be attributed to the change in youth age to 18 in 2007. This change allowed youths aged 16 and 17 to be included in the youth license age group. The almost 10,000 sales increase in youth licenses shows the initiative to expand the age group encouraged hunters who previously had departed from hunting due to the increase in license cost return to hunting under a youth license. These sales are in opposite trend to the national statistics which show an annual decline in license sales and hunter participation.

**License Sales Resident and Non-resident Youth Trends
(Big Game)**

Year	Residency	Total Big Game	Youth Big Game
2003	Resident	261,050	18,133
	Non-Resident	113,908	2,721
	Total	374,958	20,854
2004	Resident	262,591	18,106
	Non-Resident	118,929	2,887
	Total	381,520	20,993
2005	Resident	257,973	18,335
	Non-Resident	119,740	2,862
	Total	377,713	21,197
2006	Resident	253,974	18,707
	Non-Resident	119,862	2,858
	Total	373,836	21,565
2007	Resident	251,953	21,068
	Non-Resident	118,995	2,225
	Total	370,948	23,293

Figure 1A

An analysis of the impact of resident vs non-resident youth license sales was reviewed to insure the gains seen in youth license sales for big game were from the efforts of the overall systems approach by the Hunter Outreach Program. The chart above (Figure 1A) shows approximately 13% of the overall youth license sales per year are to non-resident youth hunters. This number remained relatively consistent over the five year period reviewed. The number of resident youth hunters continued to show a slight increase in overall sales over the same timeframe. A positive trend in youth participation can be attributed to the overall outreach efforts directed at youth participation. Even though the active outreach efforts in the program are directed toward resident youth, the reduced license fee cost, late season elk hunting opportunities and increase in youth age to include 16 and 17 year old hunters continues to attract non-resident youth hunters to the state.

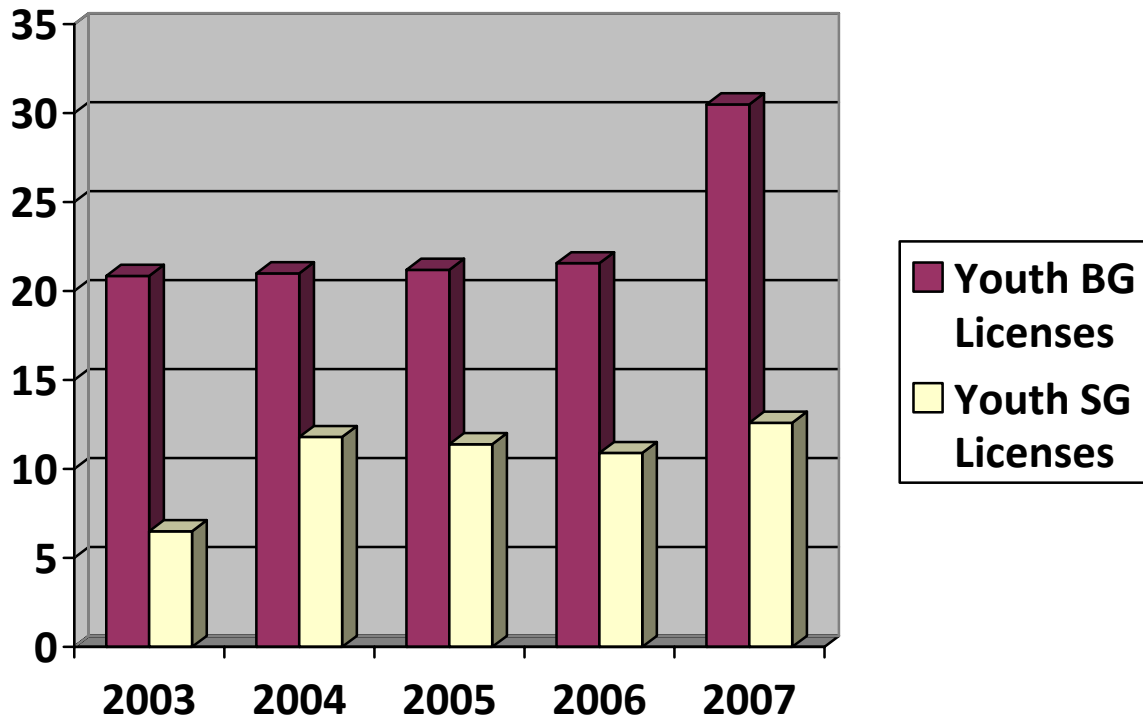


Figure 3

Figure 3 is an expanded view of the data portrayed above showing youth license sales only. Note the increase in big game sales over the past five years. Recall the significant increase in 2007 is due to the expansion of the youth age to age 18. Of concern is the slow decline in youth small game sales overall. Small game hunting is historically the starting point for most young hunters who develop a lifelong passion for hunting and deserves our focused effort in future years.

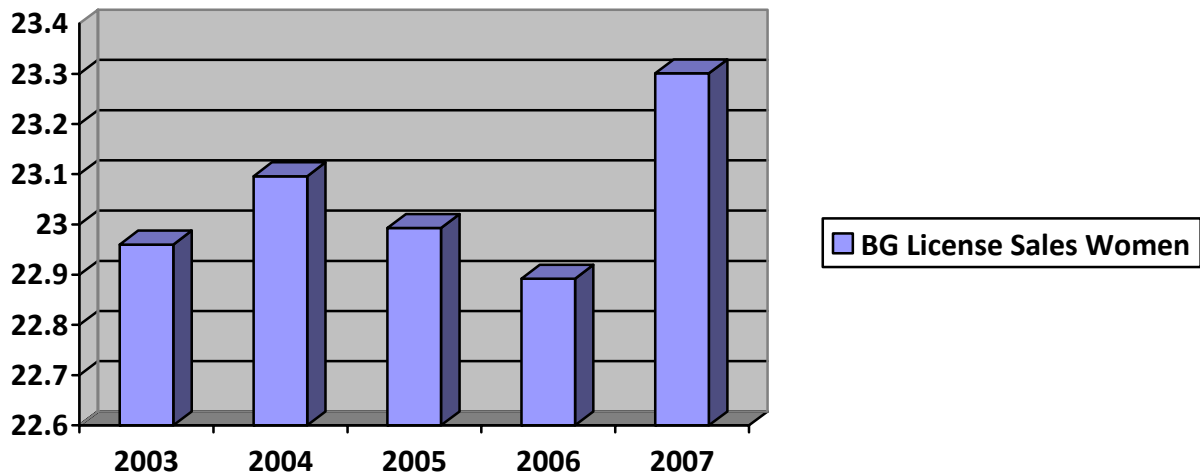


Figure 4

A review of the big game license sales to women (Figure 4) in Colorado shows a relatively steady trend with a slight growth in the past five years. The interest and participation rate of women rivals the same levels of the youth market and we must continue to find ways to involve this growing population of interested hunters through unique programs directed at them and their families.

THE FUTURE

The Hunter Outreach Program has provided Colorado with a positive step toward improving our hunter retention and recruitment objectives since its inception in 2002. But we must continue to find ways to encourage those who are hunters to remain and provide those who wish to participate in hunting with an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to enjoy their time in the field.

The Program has developed a model, through the Huntmaster program, which can be adopted by other sportsman's organizations to develop their own outreach programs. The initiatives we have taken are shown to have a positive affect on youth and women participation rates in hunting.

Future Initiatives

- Provide sportsman's organizations with a progressive program model to encourage them to begin their own outreach programs.
- Continue our efforts to recruit and train Huntmasters and Outreach Volunteers in the DOW Hunter Outreach Program. In many areas of the state, the Hunter Outreach Program is limited in the number of hunting events we can provide due to the lack of trained Huntmasters to organize and run the event. While some sportsman's organizations provide support in the form of guides and volunteers, a critical element of our ability to expand the program is the number of trained Huntmasters across the state.
- Encourage all groups to include women in their programs and expand their outreach efforts to this growing group.
- Review the small game hunting programs to see if additional effort in this area will stimulate interest in youth hunters.
- Continue to monitor changes in youth and women participation rates to determine means to make strategic changes for the future.
- Review research information by national organizations (Families Afield, National Shooting Sports Foundation and other national organizations) to gather concepts for program improvement.

Since it's inception in 2002, the Hunter Outreach Program has made a positive impact on the overall effort to recruit and retain hunters in Colorado. The long

term success of the program will be measured over time as we continue to expand our partnerships, programs and public awareness of the program.

Website locations:

Hunter Outreach: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/HunterOutreach/>

Women Afield: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/HunterOutreach/WomenAfield/>

Colorado Archery in the Schools:

<http://wildlife.state.co.us/Education/TeacherResources/ArcheryintheSchools/>

Big Game Access Program: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/BigGame/AccessProgram/>

Youth Only SWA/STLs:

<http://wildlife.state.co.us/Hunting/HunterOutreach/YouthHunting/YouthSWAs.htm>