

Colorado Parks & Wildlife

Case Study: A Market Assessment

BACKGROUND

The Colorado Parks & Wildlife system sought to identify its position in the outdoor recreation marketplace and set the future direction of Colorado Parks & Wildlife. Where would the Corona Insights research team begin? By identifying the facilities, services, and programs valued most by Colorado citizens and visitors to the parks.

The client was well overdue for gathering insights from the community. In fact, it had been nearly six years since Colorado Parks & Wildlife had done a marketing assessment. What did this mean for senior park staff? It meant they didn't understand their current or potential visitors and therefore weren't marketing effectively. In other words, they needed insights they could rely on. And they needed to fill in gaps from previous studies to develop a marketing strategy that worked.

In order to accomplish this, senior park staff had to get fresh research from both visitors and non-visitors regarding their perceptions, needs, and knowledge levels of specific services and potential activities. They also needed to understand the economic drawing power of state parks in Colorado. This required an evaluation of where visitors spent their money.

CORONA'S SOLUTION

So how did Corona Insights help Colorado Parks & Wildlife understand its visitors and non-visitors better? To begin, we used multiple research components to examine the perceptions, attitudes, and future desires of State Parks' visitors and

non-visitors pertaining to Colorado Parks & Wildlife. When combined, these elements made up a detailed marketing assessment. By reaching visitors and non-visitors through various ways, State Parks could get a holistic view of how their parks were used, or not used. But the significant seasonality of park visits also needed to be accounted for. So the research portion of the project required a full 12 months of data collection.

The multiple research components included:

- ➔ Conducting a statewide **Public Survey**. This survey assessed **market share issues for Colorado Parks & Wildlife, reasons for visiting or not visiting state parks, and the extent of general public support among Colorado residents for Colorado Parks & Wildlife. It included thorough and accurate sampling to ensure all regions of the state's parks were accurately represented.**
- ➔ Conducting **Public Focus Groups** of Colorado Parks & Wildlife visitors and non-visitors. These focus groups, in five strategically chosen cities throughout the state, provided **in-depth opinions of parks and peoples' perceptions of the role of State Parks when compared to other recreation options.**
- ➔ **Conducting over 1,000 Future Direction Surveys.** Exactly what were visitors' priorities for Colorado Parks & Wildlife? And what did that mean for the future direction of the parks? To find the answers, Corona asked strategic questions, as opposed to the more tactical ones in the Visitors Survey. Corona deployed the surveys in five strategically selected state parks that represented a microcosm of the larger state park system.



➔ Conducting over 9,400 **Visitor Intercept Surveys**. These surveys examined the visitor experience at Colorado Parks & Wildlife, including the demographics of visitors, visitor satisfaction levels with specific park features, and assessments of other important issues. But some parks had varying visitation levels throughout the year and within different areas of the parks. So how would Corona get an accurate number of surveys from the individual parks? Corona created different sampling plans for all of the 42 parks to accurately reflect every park’s unique mix of outdoor activities and visitors. They each aimed to complete about 200 surveys over the course of a year. This sampling method enabled **findings by each individual park, as well as findings on a statewide basis**.

➔ Conducting a **Park Visitor Spending Analysis**. As part of the visitor intercept survey, respondents were asked to detail their spending, in several different categories, within 50 miles of the park that was directly related to the park visit. What did the analysis of this information mean for local parks? **It meant the parks knew the economic benefit to local areas as a result of park visits**.

After analyzing the data from each research component, Corona then synthesized major findings into one Marketing Assessment Summary Report. The report processed the information obtained in each research component into a set of global findings and recommendations.



Roxborough State Park

THE OUTCOME

Colorado Parks & Wildlife senior staff used the findings and recommendations of the Marketing Assessment to develop a cohesive and strategic marketing approach. What’s more important is that this approach took into account the attitudes, perceptions, and future desires of their current visitor base. The newly developed marketing approach also focused on promoting Colorado Parks & Wildlife as a desirable and viable recreation option for current non-users of state parks.

The study also gave a voice to Colorado citizens, which Colorado Parks & Wildlife used to influence and inform Colorado policy makers. For example, 97 percent of Coloradans perceive Colorado Parks & Wildlife as an “asset,” and Colorado residents make up 88 percent of visitors to Colorado Parks & Wildlife. Other key findings illuminated through the research continue to help State Parks educate key constituencies about the importance of state parks to local residents and the fact that state parks benefit many Colorado communities.

In our current era of statewide budget cuts, State Parks relies on this information—especially park visitor spending—to inform local legislators and decision makers of the benefits of state parks (both recreational and financial) throughout Colorado. This has enabled the Colorado Parks & Wildlife staff to successfully promote the long-term importance and viability of state parks

Photo by Colorado Ben, available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported license](#).

