



Public Lands Jobs – Where for art thou Front Country Ranger?

What happens when, as [The Aspen Daily News](#) reports, a National Forest cannot afford to manage a place as iconic as The Maroon Bells Wilderness? It raises unthinkable possibilities: allowing it to be overrun, restricting access entirely, or having a local county manage it. [Pitkin County is in negotiations to do just that](#), stepping in to manage a federal asset that has defined Colorado's identity for generations.

National forest lands are the golden goose for Colorado--our identity, our primary attraction, and the cornerstone of both state and regional economies. Yet the systems and staffing that have sustained such places, including Hanging Lake, Booth Creek Falls, Holy Cross Mountain and Quandary Peak, has quietly been eroding for years. Even as visitation continues to climb, on the ground presence as well as the administrative capacity to manage them have gone from declining to being gutted. Local communities are stepping up to the plate with funding and messaging. In recent years, the Colorado Tourism Office and many of our local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) have shared at our Regional Economic Summits how marketing to visitors has adapted to help visitors become good stewards rather than just consumers of these landscapes. This is increasingly important as staffing for the National Forest dwindles to a skeleton crew. But education alone, even with catchy phrases and persistent placement in hotels, STRs and trailheads is no substitute for boots on the ground- boots that are increasingly scarce.



This is not new, but the situation is now acute by recent actions on the federal level. Particularly irritating to NWCCOG member jurisdictions who have been individually and collectively pushing for the SHRED act which would allow the White River National Forest to retain some of the funds it sends to Washington D.C. for the Congressional General Fund each year for staffing, The Colorado Sun reports that the state ["lost more jobs than any other state in 2025."](#) NWCCOG is [on the record going back to 2018](#) when the

WRNF cut back from a dozen rangers in the “Front Country” who provided a presence at overrun trailheads, collected garbage including human waste from illegal camps, patrolled for rogue camps with smoldering fire pits, as well as those who process the many use requests from the ski areas, work collaboratively with communities to negotiate housing on federal lands, cell phone tower operators and controversial land use files. A letter to the Congressional delegation at the time noted that the WRNF dropped from \$270,000 in funding for such positions in 2008 to \$40,000 in 2018, leaving ONE part time staff person for the entire forest for that entire summer to manage the front country. This is for the most visited National Forest in the country, and one of the highest revenue-producing when fees from such international destinations as Aspen, Snowmass, Beaver Creek, Vail, and Breckenridge are factored. NWCCOG Council approved similar letters sent in 2019. The trend has continued in the opposite direction of that advocacy.

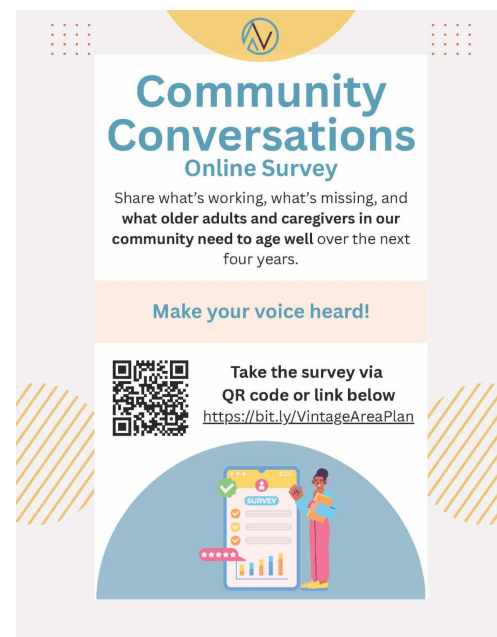
Capacity for a significant wildfire season is also a concern as reported by [Colorado News Line](#) saying that layoffs and resignations have left firefighters mowing lawns and other “duties far from the fire line.” Colorado’s Congressional Delegation is advocating for accelerated wildfire mitigation and staffing noted in [this press release](#) from March and as reported in [The Aspen Times](#). No one wants a major disaster, or the inevitable “I-told-you-so” comments that will follow.

Photo credit: Kaya Williams/Special to the Aspen Daily News

Vintage Summer Happenings



Vintage held its annual caregiver conference on June 3rd in El Jebel and it was another smashing success! Over 50 people signed up to join a day of education, learn of local resources, and connect with other caregivers and professionals.



Vintage is gathering input to inform their Four-Year Area Plan. There's a short, [online survey](#) to complete and share what's working, what's missing, and what older adults and caregivers in our community need to age well over the next four years. The survey closes August 17th.

Elevator Program Welcomes A New Inspector



Trent Hillier has been promoted to Elevator Inspector! Many of you know Trent from his time as Administrative Assistant — a role he leaves far better than he found it. We're thrilled he's continuing to grow right here at NWCCOG, and we have every confidence he'll bring that same dedication and care to his new position. His shoes in the administrative office will be tough to fill.

At NWCCOG, we take real pride in promoting from within and creating pathways for our team to grow. Congratulations Trent — we can't wait to see where this next chapter takes you!

NWCCOG Executive Director Jon Stavney Earns Master's Degree

Please join us in congratulating NWCCOG Executive Director Jon Stavney, who recently earned his Master of Public Administration (MPA) from the University of Colorado Denver. This is a tremendous achievement, and one that reflects the same commitment to thoughtful, informed leadership that Jon brings to his work at NWCCOG every day.



The MPA program at CU Denver is designed for working public servants — covering topics like policy analysis, public finance, organizational leadership, and intergovernmental relations. It's no small feat to pursue a graduate degree while leading a regional council, and Jon's completion of the program is a testament to his dedication to both professional growth and public service.

For his capstone project, Jon turned his focus to one of the most distinctive and challenging stretches of roadway in our region: Glenwood Canyon. His research examined the impact of truck lane regulations in the Canyon — a topic with real implications for safety, freight movement, and regional connectivity along I-70.

Glenwood Canyon presents a unique set of challenges. The narrow, technically demanding corridor carries significant commercial truck traffic alongside passenger vehicles, and lane restrictions have long been a subject of debate among transportation planners, trucking interests, and local communities. Jon's capstone digs into the data and policy landscape surrounding those regulations, offering analysis that is both academically rigorous and practically relevant to the communities NWCCOG serves. You can read Jon's full capstone project on our website [here](#).

Congratulations, Jon — we're proud to have you leading NWCCOG, and even prouder to see you modeling the kind of lifelong learning and civic commitment that makes our region stronger.

NWCCOG Council Retreat: Input Wanted



NWCCOG Council Members will be attending their Council retreat August 5-6. If friends of NWCCOG, newsletter readers, staff, or other electeds have input on the direction for NWCCOG, this is a prime opportunity to share your thoughts with your member representatives. You can find your member representative on our [Council page](#).

COG Quirks: Small World, Stranger Connections

Trent: Dragged himself to a CPR recertification class in Lakewood, ran into his old college RA, and somehow the entire class turned into an impromptu puppetry lecture when the instructor discovered they'd gone to Olivet Nazarene — home of the annual Fellowship of Christian Puppeteers conference. Zero CPR was learned. No ragrets.

Jannah: Grew up touring every library in Colorado doing folklore puppet shows for the summer reading program. Her dad built the stage, made the puppets, did the whole thing.

Two NWCCOG colleagues. Two completely unprompted puppet connections. Statistically this cannot be a coincidence and we're choosing to believe the puppets are networking.



Upcoming Board Meetings

Thursday, August 6, 2026 – The Hoffman Hotel, 30 Kodiak Drive, Basalt, CO 81621
Full Council & EDD Board Meeting, Facility Tour TBD
Primary Agenda Items: Approve June meeting minutes, approve 2027 dues, discussion re: Annual Planning Meeting Agenda; EDD Board meeting

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