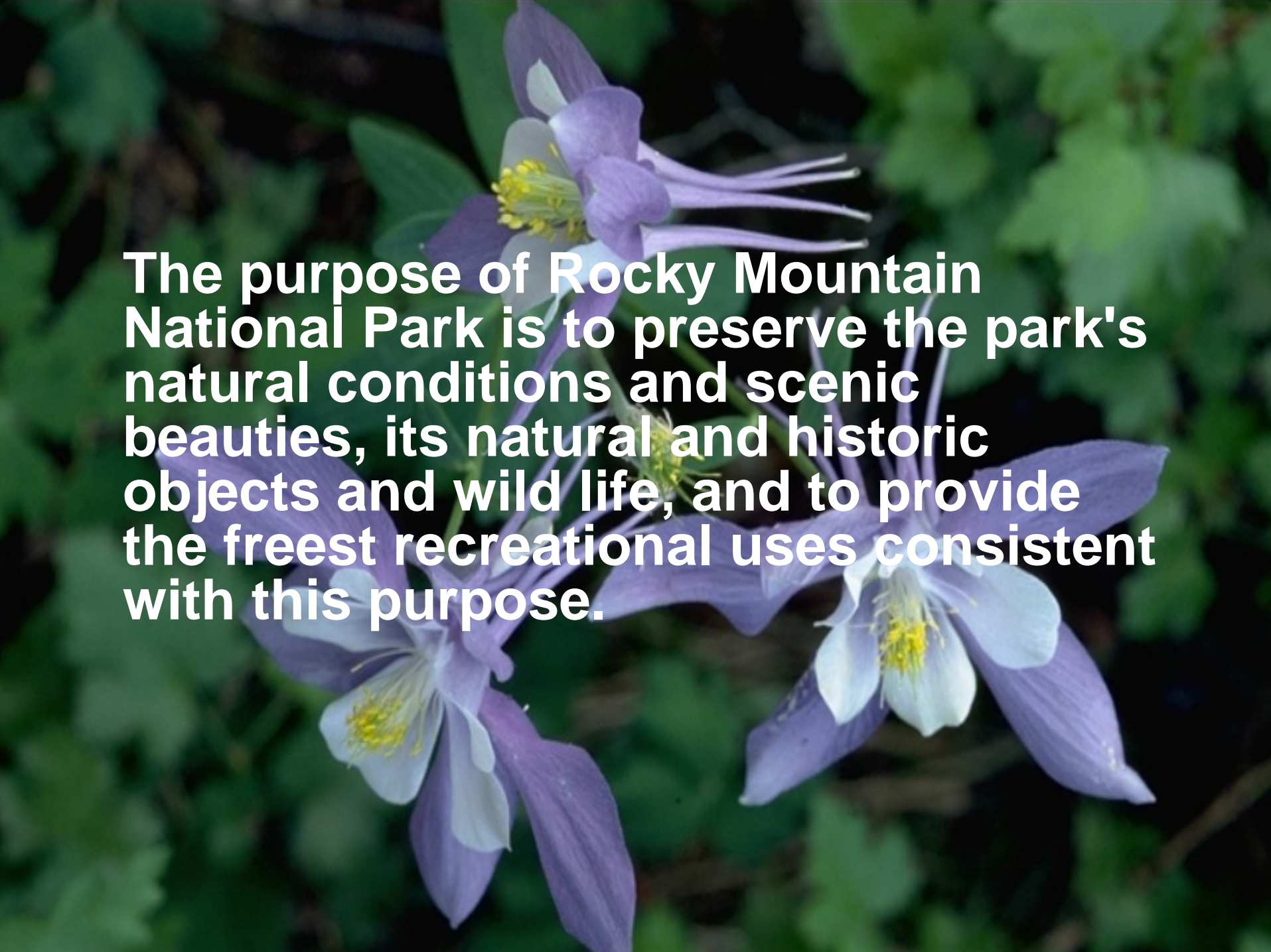




ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK



- 
- A scenic photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, two children are standing in a field of yellow wildflowers, looking out over a vast green valley. The valley is dotted with small ponds and patches of snow. In the background, a range of rugged mountains with significant snow cover rises against a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds.
- Established in 1915
 - 10th oldest national park
 - Approximately 3 million visitors annually

The image features several purple columbine flowers with prominent yellow centers, set against a blurred green background of foliage. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing the characteristic five-pointed shape of the petals. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image, providing a clear statement about the purpose of Rocky Mountain National Park.

The purpose of Rocky Mountain National Park is to preserve the park's natural conditions and scenic beauties, its natural and historic objects and wild life, and to provide the freest recreational uses consistent with this purpose.

A scenic landscape photograph showing a range of rugged mountains in the distance. The sky is filled with soft, white and grey clouds. In the foreground, there are large, reddish-brown rocks with patches of green moss or lichen. The overall lighting suggests a late afternoon or early morning setting.

265,800 acres

416 square miles

147 lakes

**Headwaters of Colorado
River, Big Thompson River,
Cache la Poudre River**

Visitors enjoy viewing scenery







Viewing Wildlife





Viewing Elk during Rut

- September and October
- Columbus Day Weekend can be as busy as Fourth of July Weekend









A hiker with a backpack and trekking poles is walking away from the camera on a dirt trail. The trail is surrounded by green vegetation and yellow wildflowers. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains under a blue sky with white clouds. The hiker is wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants. The trail is rocky and uneven. The surrounding forest is dense with green trees and shrubs. The mountains in the distance are rugged and covered in snow. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is a beautiful representation of a mountain hiking experience.

Enjoying a variety of recreational activities:

Hiking over 355 miles of trails

Fishing, horseback riding, snowshoeing, backcountry skiing





Ranger Led Programs

Visiting one of the park's five visitor centers



Traveling on Trail Ridge Road

**The highest continuous paved road
in the United States, reaching
12,183 feet.**



Others enjoying their national park

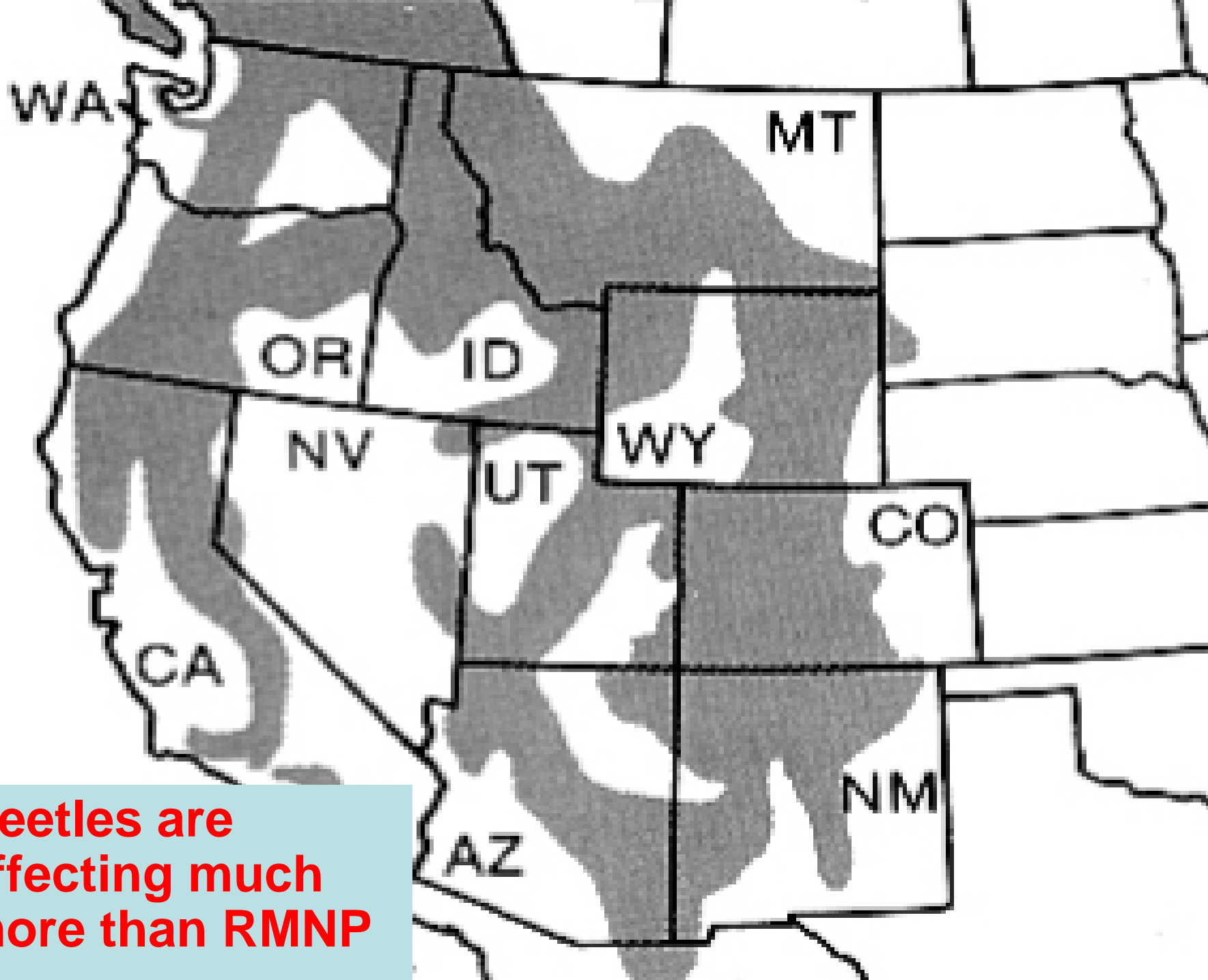


Ongoing Issues...



Forest Health





**Beetles are
affecting much
more than RMNP**

Lodgepole Pine Forests

- ✦ Lodgepole pine forests are being heavily impacted by the ongoing mountain pine beetle epidemic.
- ✦ Not all lodgepole pine forests are the same.
- ✦ Forests are living systems subject to constant change.
- ✦ Lodgepole pine will not disappear from the southern Rocky Mountains.
- ✦ Active vegetation management is unlikely to stop the spread of the current mountain pine beetle outbreak.
- ✦ Though they are infrequent, large intense fires with extreme fire behavior are characteristic of lodgepole pine forests.
- ✦ In forests killed by mountain pine beetles, future fires could be more likely than fires before the outbreak. Large intense fires with extreme fire behavior are again possible.
- ✦ Mountain pine beetle outbreaks are not likely to cause increased erosion.
- ✦ Climate changes will most likely contribute to substantial forest changes in the decades ahead.

Because the task is enormous, the park's priorities for mitigation of the effects of beetles are focused on removing **hazard trees and hazard fuels tied to the protection of life and property**. The goal is to mitigate hazard tree threats in or near park facilities.





Bark beetle/hazard tree work planned this year

Spraying:

- Total of 5000 trees on both east and west sides. Concentrate on historic landscape, high value trees, and high value screening.

Hazard Tree Mitigation

- Enormous task at hand
- Goal is to mitigate hazard tree threats from park facilities such as campgrounds, parking lots, housing areas and visitor centers
- Some temporary closures may occur until hazards are mitigated

Air Quality

**Nitrogen Deposition Reduction
Plan**

Ozone



WATER SUPPLY AND STORAGE COMPANY TO PAY \$9 MILLION FOR DAMAGES TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

On Monday, May 5, the Water Supply and Storage Company (WSSC), a mutual ditch company and the owner and operator of the Grand River Ditch, agreed to pay \$9 million for damages to natural resources within Rocky Mountain National Park caused by a May 30, 2003, breach of the Grand River Ditch. The settlement proceeds will be used to restore areas in Rocky Mountain National Park that were damaged by the breach. This is the largest natural resource damages payment in the history of the Park System Resource Protection Act.



Cooperative Projects

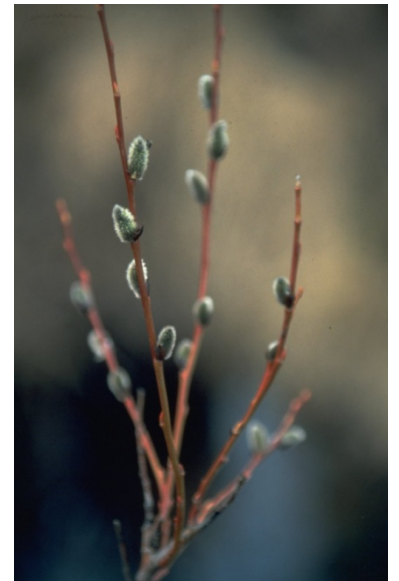
- Bighorn Sheep Workshop
- Greenback Cutthroat Trout Recovery
- Boreal Toad Tadpole Release
- Chronic Wasting Disease Testing in Deer and Elk



Elk & Vegetation Management Plan/EIS

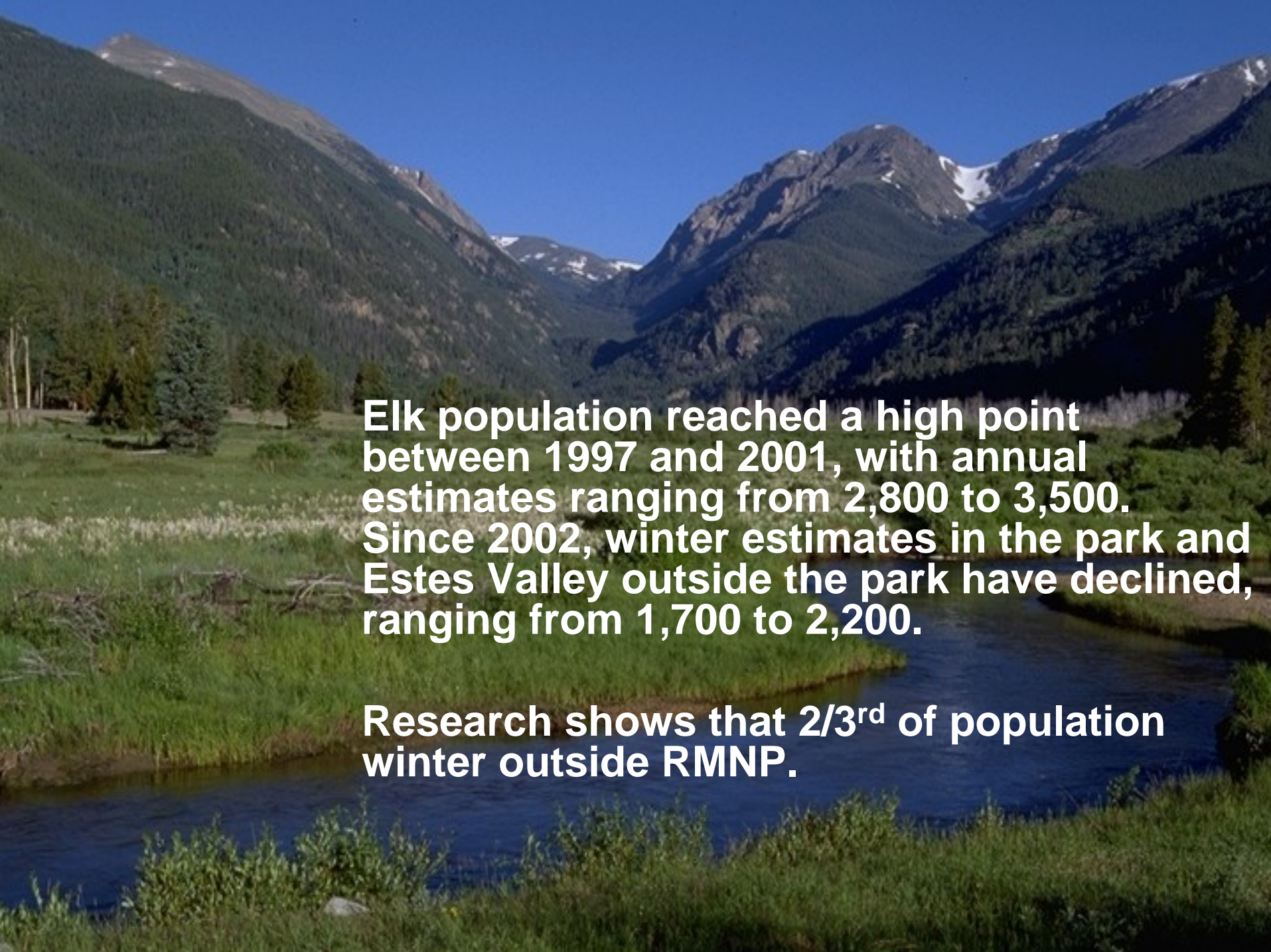


Research has shown that the elk herd in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Estes Valley, is larger, less migratory and more concentrated than it would be under natural conditions. As a result, willow and aspen stands are declining, depriving other wildlife of the important habitat they need.



The Final Elk and Vegetation Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is the result of a seven year research phase followed by a four year interagency planning process. The plan, using adaptive management principles, will guide park management for the next 20 years.



A scenic landscape of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a river flows through a lush green field. The middle ground shows a dense forest of evergreen trees. In the background, majestic mountains with patches of snow rise against a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Elk population reached a high point between 1997 and 2001, with annual estimates ranging from 2,800 to 3,500. Since 2002, winter estimates in the park and Estes Valley outside the park have declined, ranging from 1,700 to 2,200.

Research shows that 2/3rd of population winter outside RMNP.

Conservation Tools to be Used in Plan Implementation:

- Fencing
- Redistribution
- Culling



Goals for the number of elk removed will be determined from annual population monitoring.



NPS Policy

NPS Management Policies (2006) allow destruction of animal populations (culling) under certain circumstances:

4.4.2.1 NPS Actions That Remove Native Plants and Animals:

...Where visitor use or other human activities cannot be modified or curtailed, the Service may directly reduce the animal population by using several animal population management techniques, either separately or together. These techniques include relocation, public hunting on lands outside a park or where legislatively authorized within a park, habitat management, predator restoration, reproductive intervention, and destruction of animals by NPS personnel or their authorized agents ...

Authorized Agents

- NPS personnel would be responsible for culling operations. When additional personnel are needed to achieve annual population goals, NPS personnel would be augmented by authorized agents under the direct supervision of NPS personnel.
- Cost, efficiency, and effectiveness would be the factors that determine when authorized agents are needed.
- Authorized agents can include:
 - Qualified volunteers (selected and managed by NPS personnel with assistance from CDOW)
 - Professional staff from other federal, state or local agencies or Indian tribes
 - Contractors
- Cullers, including NPS personnel and authorized agents, would be certified in firearms training, specially trained in wildlife culling, and be required to pass a proficiency test in order to qualify to participate in culling activities. Cullers would be expected to work in teams under the supervision of a NPS team leader, cull and process multiple animals in any one culling event, and spend the time necessary to ensure humane dispatch and quality meat recovery.

WildEarth Guardians' Lawsuit

- Filed March 25, 2008
- The suit charges that the National Park Service failed to adequately consider the reintroduction of a self-regulating population of gray wolves to Rocky Mountain National Park as part of its plan to address ongoing elk problems.
- The suit also charges that the National Park Service violated the Organic Act and the RMNP Act by failing to prohibit hunting in RMNP and that the NPS violated the Endangered Species Act by failing to carry out programs for the conservation of gray wolves in the park. The suit is asking for injunctive relief enjoining the NPS from hunting elk and that "controlled culling" is hunting.



Elk Research

Photo: John Cordsen

CWD live test for free ranging elk herd:

- 136 female elk darted
- 117 usable biopsies
- 13 tested positive for CWD, 11% prevalence in this sample population

While handling animals, also tested multi year fertility control agent.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

