



Fiscal Note

Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

SB 26-030: LOCAL ACCESS STATE PARKS GRANT PROGRAM

Prime Sponsors:

Sen. Baisley

Fiscal Analyst:

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Published for: Senate State Affairs

Drafting number: LLS 26-0585

Version: Initial Fiscal Note

Date: January 22, 2026

Fiscal note status: This fiscal note reflects the introduced bill.

Summary Information

Overview. The bill creates the State Parks and State Wildlife Area Access Grant Program to provide funding to local governments for improved access to state parks and wildlife areas.

Types of impacts. The bill is projected to affect the following areas on an ongoing basis:

- State Transfers/Diversions
- State Expenditures
- TABOR Refunds
- Local Government

Appropriations. No appropriation is required as the funds in the bill are continuously appropriated to the Departments of Local Affairs and Natural Resources.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts

| Type of Impact | Budget Year FY 2026-27 | Out Year FY 2027-28 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| State Revenue | \$0 | \$0 |
| State Expenditures | up to \$7,000,000 | up to \$7,000,000 |
| Diverted Funds | \$7,000,000 | \$7,000,000 |
| Change in TABOR Refunds | \$7,000,000 | \$7,000,000 |
| Change in State FTE | 1.8 FTE | 2.2 FTE |

Table 1A
State Diversions

| Fund Source | Budget Year FY 2026-27 | Out Year FY 2027-28 |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund | -\$3,500,000 | -\$3,500,000 |
| Wildlife Cash Fund | -\$3,500,000 | -\$3,500,000 |
| State Park & State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund | \$7,000,000 | \$7,000,000 |
| Net Diversion | \$0 | \$0 |

Table 1B
State Expenditures

| Fund Source | Budget Year FY 2026-27 | Out Year FY 2027-28 |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| General Fund | \$0 | \$0 |
| Cash Funds – CPW | -\$7,000,000 | -\$7,000,000 |
| Cash Funds – DOLA | up to \$7,000,000 | up to \$7,000,000 |
| Federal Funds | \$0 | \$0 |
| Centrally Appropriated | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Expenditures | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total FTE | 1.8 FTE | 2.2 FTE |

Summary of Legislation

The bill creates the State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Grant Program to provide funding to local governments to improve access to state parks and wildlife areas. The Division of Local Government (division) in the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) must administer the program and adopt rules for implementation.

Under current law, the first \$36 million in revenue from the Keep Colorado Wild Pass fee is allocated to various priorities, and any remaining revenue is split evenly between the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund and the Wildlife Cash Fund to finance the general mission of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The bill requires funding in excess of the \$36 million to be credited to the newly created State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund, which is continuously appropriated to the division. If DOLA receives no applications to the grant program by December 31, 2029, the money credited to the new grant program cash fund is transferred back to these two cash funds.

Finally, DOLA is required to provide annual reporting on the grant program metrics to legislative local government committees beginning in 2027.

Background and Assumptions

In FY 2024-25, approximately 1.5 million Keep Colorado Wild Passes were sold. The regular pass is \$29, and the collector plate pass is \$145, covering a five-year registration period. Total pass revenue in FY 2024-25 was about \$40.9 million. CPW anticipates pass sales increasing by 5 percent in FY 2025-26, with that increase projected to remain flat in future years. Therefore, the fiscal note assumes that ongoing pass revenue will be about \$43 million annually beginning in FY 2025-26, resulting in \$7 million credited to the State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund.

State Diversions and Transfers

The bill diverts an estimated \$3.5 million per year from the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund, and \$3.5 million per year from the Wildlife Cash Fund in CPW in the DNR to the newly created State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund in DOLA.

The bill also requires any funds not awarded as grant money from the State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund to be transferred back to and split between the Parks and Outdoor Recreation Cash Fund and Wildlife Cash Fund on December 31, 2029. The fiscal note assumes grant funding will be fully awarded and a transfer will not occur, or be minimal.

State Expenditures

The bill has a net neutral effect on state expenditures by increasing spending in DOLA by approximately \$7 million in FY 2026-27 and in ongoing years and decreasing expenditures in CPW in the DNR by \$7 million beginning in FY 2026-27 and in ongoing years. These costs are shown in Table 2 and described in the sections below.

Table 2
State Expenditures
All Departments

| Department | Budget Year FY 2026-27 | Out Year FY 2027-28 |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Department of Local Affairs | up to \$7,000,000 | up to \$7,000,000 |
| Department of Natural Resources | -\$7,000,000 | -\$7,000,000 |
| Total Costs | \$0 | \$0 |

Department of Local Affairs

The bill will increase expenditures in DOLA by up to \$7 million in FY 2026-27 and in ongoing years. The fiscal note assumes that FTE costs required by the department will be paid out of the approximately \$7 million from Keep Colorado Wild Pass funds deposited into the State Parks and State Wildlife Area Access Cash Fund. Exact expenditures will depend on how many grants are awarded to local governments. Costs are shown in Table 2A and discussed below.

Table 2A
State Expenditures
Department of Local Affairs

| Cost Component | Budget Year FY 2026-27 | Out Year FY 2027-28 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Grant Payments | up to \$6,835,068 | up to \$6,815,627 |
| Personal Services | \$112,101 | \$136,921 |
| Operating Expenses | \$2,304 | \$2,816 |
| Capital Outlay Costs | \$14,000 | \$0 |
| Centrally Appropriated Costs | \$36,527 | \$44,636 |
| Total Costs | up to \$7,000,000 | up to \$7,000,000 |
| Total FTE | 1.8 FTE | 2.2 FTE |

Staff

In total, DOLA requires 2.2 FTE to launch the grant program, manage applications, disburse funds, and meet reporting requirements. Standard operating and capital outlay costs are included, and first-year costs are prorated for a September 2026 start date. These positions are summarized below.

- **Grant Program Implementation.** The department requires 2.0 FTE to oversee program development and launch, and provide stakeholder engagement. Additionally, staff will be required to manage application cycles, provide technical assistance, review applications, monitor contracts, manage payout requirements, and coordinate with local governments.
- **Grant Program Oversight and Administration.** The department requires 0.2 FTE to provide administration and perform accounting related to contracts.

Grant Payments

The funds remaining after paying the FTE costs are assumed to be available for grant funding. This is estimated to be approximately \$6.8 million. The exact amount expended by the department will depend on how many local governments apply for the funding and how much funding is awarded on an annual basis.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources

Expenditures in CPW will decrease by approximately \$7 million beginning FY 2026-27 and in ongoing years. Since CPW is a state enterprise and receives the bulk of its funding from fees, the division's ability to recoup these costs is limited. Redirecting the Keep Colorado Wild fees to the new cash fund will reduce funds available for state park capital construction, state park expansion, wolf conflict minimization and depredation compensation, and species conservation. Some of these costs are statutory, and CPW will need alternative funding sources to cover the reduction.

Departments of Personnel and Treasury

Workload will increase for the Departments of Personnel and Administration and Treasury to manage and perform accounting for the cash fund created in the bill. While no appropriation is required at this time, these departments may seek additional funding through the annual budget process based on the cumulative impact of all cash funds created through legislation.

Centrally Appropriated Costs

Pursuant to a Joint Budget Committee policy, certain costs associated with this bill are addressed through the annual budget process and centrally appropriated in the Long Bill or supplemental appropriations bills, rather than in this bill. These costs, which may include employee insurance, supplemental employee retirement payments, indirect cost assessments, and other costs, are shown in the table above.

TABOR Refunds

CPW is a state enterprise, so revenue to the division is not subject to TABOR. Diverting funds from CPW to DOLA causes the funds be counted as state revenue under TABOR. Consequently, the bill is expected to increase the amount of state revenue required to be refunded to taxpayers by approximately \$7 million in FY 2026-27.

The bill does not change current expectations that the state will be below its revenue limit in the current FY 2025-26. This estimate assumes the December 2025 LCS revenue forecast. A forecast of state revenue subject to TABOR is not available beyond FY 2027-28. Because TABOR refunds are paid from the General Fund, increased cash fund revenue will reduce the amount of General Fund available to spend or save in FY 2026-27, FY 2027-28, and any future years when the state is over its revenue limit.

Local Government

Revenue and workload will increase to local governments that seek and receive grant funding through the State Park and State Wildlife Area Access Grant Program. As discussed in the State Expenditure section, the fiscal note assumes about \$6.8 million will be available for grants each year if the program is fully utilized.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed.

State and Local Government Contacts

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Counties | Natural Resources |
| Information Technology | Personnel |
| Law | Transportation |
| Local Affairs | Treasury |
| Municipalities | |