



August 6, 2026

The Honorable Jared Polis  
Governor, State of Colorado  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, CO 80203

Via Email

**RE: Public Comment Procedures and Public Trust in Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Commission Decision-Making**

Dear Governor Polis,

We write on behalf of the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado, the Council of Governments and Economic Development District representing our four core counties, Garfield, Mesa, Moffat, and Rio Blanco, and three associate member counties, Delta, Grand, and Montrose, along with their municipalities. We are writing to raise concerns about discussions during the July 16, 2026 Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting regarding public comment procedures for elected officials and public participation, and about what those discussions reveal regarding the broader direction of the Commission.

During that meeting, the Commission spent considerable time discussing whether individuals who had traveled to attend should be guaranteed an opportunity to speak. The discussion expanded to include reminders that written comments could be submitted to the Commission and questions about whether elected officials should continue receiving additional time during public comment because they have other avenues through which to communicate with the Commission.

Respectfully, we believe the discussion reflects a misunderstanding of the purpose of public comment. Public comment is not simply a method of delivering information to Commissioners. Its value is that concerns, local knowledge, and differing perspectives are presented openly, heard by everyone present, and entered into the public record. Written comments can be a useful supplement, but they cannot replace live public testimony.

The same principle applies to elected officials. County Commissioners do not have special access to CPW. They use the same channels available to every other Coloradan. What distinguishes them is that they have been elected to represent entire communities. Many of those constituents will never be able to attend a Commission meeting because of distance, work obligations, or cost. In many instances, elected officials are also communicating positions that have been formally adopted by their governing bodies following publicly noticed meetings that included public input and deliberation. When elected officials speak during public comment, they are bringing those communities into the room. Providing them a reasonable opportunity to do so is not preferential treatment.

The discussion at the July meeting also highlighted a broader concern. Increasingly, many rural communities, agricultural producers, sportsmen, and local governments believe their experience and expertise carry less weight than broader social preferences. We do not believe social science has no role in wildlife management, but public sentiment cannot replace biological science, professional expertise, and the lived experience of those most directly affected by wildlife policy.

Colorado employs biologists, veterinarians, wildlife managers, and other professionals because sound wildlife management depends upon science and experience. Yet many of the people who live with the consequences of these decisions increasingly feel that those expert perspectives are secondary.

Governor Polis, this issue is especially important because you have already recognized the challenges facing Colorado's agricultural communities. In 2024, you signed SB24-055, creating the Agricultural and Rural Community Behavioral Health Program. In doing so, you acknowledged the significant pressures facing farmers, ranchers, and rural communities and the need for additional support.

Those pressures have not gone away. In many parts of rural Colorado, they continue to grow. Some producers leave the industry. Others see no future for the next generation in operations that have been in their families for decades. When that occurs, Colorado loses working agricultural lands, experienced producers, and some of its strongest conservation partners.

The people most affected by these policies are not asking to be the only voices heard. They are asking to be heard at all. They are asking for confidence that biological science, professional expertise, and on-the-ground experience carry meaningful weight in the decisions being made. They are also asking that their elected representatives retain a meaningful opportunity to speak on their behalf in the public forum where those decisions are discussed.

Public trust is not lost because people disagree with a decision. Public trust is lost when people conclude they are no longer being meaningfully heard. We are concerned that confidence in the Commission is being tested across much of rural Colorado and that the July discussion demonstrated why.

Accordingly, we respectfully request that you and CPW leadership:

1. Reinstate guaranteed speaking time of up to five minutes for elected officials at CPW Commission meetings.
2. Reaffirm that live public comment remains the primary mechanism for public engagement and public accountability.
3. Clarify that written comments complement, but do not replace, public testimony at Commission meetings.

4. Ensure biological science and the experience of affected communities remain central considerations in Commission decisions.
5. Ensure future Commission appointments reflect a balanced range of expertise, experience, and stakeholder perspectives.

Our seven member counties across Northwest Colorado depend on a productive working relationship with CPW on issues ranging from wildlife management to land use and economic development. We ask that the Commission and this administration recommit to a process that values local input, respects affected communities, and maintains public confidence that wildlife management decisions are grounded in science, expertise, transparency, and meaningful public participation.

Respectfully submitted,



Cody Davis  
AGNC Chair  
Mesa County Commissioner



Doug Overton  
AGNC Vice-Chair  
Rio Blanco County Commissioner

cc: CPW Executive Director Laura Clellan  
CPW Commissioners  
DNR Executive Director Dan Gibbs  
AGNC Membership