Co-creating a Regional Vision for People + Nature

Metro DNA
METRO DENVER NATURE ALLIANCE
Align nature-based efforts to ensure more equitable access to nature and to promote healthy people, communities, and natural places.
“We need more open spaces”: Denver residents feeling stifled by city’s building boom seek room to roam

Lack of sufficient green space has become a common complaint among Denverites
How to Create Nature Champions:

1. Provide fun, hands-on nature experiences
2. Take learning outside
3. Have kids note 5 good things in nature everyday to improve their connection to nature
4. Repeat!
5. Share your love of the outdoors with children

Meaningful, positive experiences in nature guide children, youth and adults toward care for nature.

Time in nature during childhood and role models who care for nature are the two biggest factors that contribute to environmental stewardship in adulthood.

The Benefits of Time in Nature:

- Better social skills
- Enhanced health
- Increased self-esteem
- Improved grades
- Pro-environment behaviors
- Stronger emotional connections to people and nature

Time outdoors in nature contributes to children’s care for nature while supporting their healthy development.

Green Network Benefits:

- Protect ecological resources
- Provide beautification
- Create reinvestment & growth potential
- Provide equity & empowerment
- Improve health & quality of life

- Water cleaning and storage
- Wildlife habitat
- Passive recreation
- Gathering/socializing
- Economic development
- Environmental education
- Transportation alternatives
- Cooling and shade
- Active recreation
- Food production

Additional research on the benefits of nature available at childrenandnature.org/research
“We have confidence that [a] unified vision of conservation will result in significant progress over the long term. The coming together of nature conservation, historical preservation, ecosystem services, environmental justice and civil rights, sustainability, public health, and science communities is overdue, but when fully accomplished will reap significant reward. As these interests increasingly practice the skills of collaboration, and gain experience in working closely together in more common cause, they will find their collective ‘voice’ to be powerful, influential, and effective.”
CONTINENTAL CONTEXT

POTENTIAL & EXISTING CONNECTIVITY/VULNERABILITY

MODELING POTENTIAL BROADSCALE WILDLIFE MOVEMENT PATHWAYS WITHIN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

Figure 2: Wild LifeLines™

Figure 3: Wild LifeLines™ normalized to Colorado state boundaries.
Regional water/ecological data + Social-ecological

Inspire deeper understanding of stewardship and dynamics of water

Address human & environmental challenges

Bring people together in shared vision and provide hope

Inspire investments & build momentum

GREEN NETWORK BENEFITS

PROTECT ECOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Water cleaning and storage

Wildlife habitat

PROVIDE BEAUTIFICATION

Passive recreation

Gathering/socializing

CREATE REINVESTMENT & GROWTH POTENTIAL

Economic development

PROVIDE EQUITY & EMPOWERMENT

Environmental education

Transportation alternatives

IMPROVE HEALTH & QUALITY OF LIFE

Cooling and shade

Active recreation

Food production

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAYBOOK
Atlanta Ecological Framework

Ecological Needs + Ecological Threats and Risks

PRELIMINARY DRAFT VISION SUMMARY MAP

Protect - Protect areas with high-quality natural resources such as native forests, soils, parks, and water bodies.
Green - Deleuze and Green the built environment through accessible greenbelts and resilient policies and strategies.
Connect - Create an interconnected system of high-quality natural resources and the ‘greened’ built environment.

Biohabitats
SOUTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIOREGION
City Design Strategies

Growth Areas will be designed to connect people and accommodate growth.

Conservation Areas will be designed to connect nature and protect other things that we value.
Regional Conservation Assessment

leverage existing data and planning documents to identify high-quality, connected, and climate-resilient habitat in the metro area
Regional planning framework & ecoregions

- Montane Forest & Foothill Shrubland
- Front Range Fans
- Rolling Plains
- Sandsage Prairie
1. Alpine Zone
2. Crystalline Mid-Elevation Forests
3. Crystalline Subalpine Forests
4. Flat to Rolling Plains
5. Foothill Grasslands
6. Foothill Shrublands
7. Front Range Fans
8. Moderate Relief Plains
9. Piedmont Plains and Tablelands
10. Pine-Oak Woodlands
11. Rolling Sand Plains

METRO DNA ECO REGIONS

Pie Chart:
- Front Range Fans: 59.93%
- Pine-Oak Woodlands: 54.60%
- Crystalline Subalpine Forests: 2.94%
- Crystalline Mid-Elevation Forests: 21.80%
- Foothill Grasslands: 9.69%
- Foothill Shrublands: 3.50%
- Moderate Relief Plains: 7.34%
- Flat to Rolling Plains: 10.85%
- Alpine Zone: 1.98%
- Rolling Sand Plains: 0.29%
Regional Initiatives

TNC: Urban ecology and state conservation initiatives

MDNA: 7 county collaborative conservation planning

DRCOG: 7 counties, Data for high resolution land cover

HIGHLINE CANAL: Stormwater Transformation Pisces Grant
Nexus with NWFW Large Landscape Grants Focus (ReSTORE Colorado)

- South Platte Watersheds (HUC12) &
- Potential Wildfire Risks
GOAL SCENARIO: 
Our job is to filter for decision-makers!

NATURAL HABITAT & CONNECTIVITY

Regional Conservation Assessment
- Close Coordination with Land Managers & Decision Makers
- Science-Driven Assessment & Map of Priority Areas to Protect, Restore, and Enhance
- Key Focal & Indicator Wildlife Species

SOCIAL VULNERABILITY & ACCESS TO NATURE

- Socioeconomic Status
- Household Composition & Disability
- Minority Status & Linguistic Isolation
- Housing & Transportation
- 10-Minute Walk to a Park

REGIONAL VISION FOR PEOPLE + NATURE

- Provide decision-makers with information and strategies to efficiently incorporate conservation needs into policies.
- Combined, dynamic, and applicable vision for nature, natural infrastructure, access, and land use for the Metro Denver region
Living infrastructure

A strategically planned and managed network of working landscapes, natural lands and waterways at multiple scales that conserve ecosystem functions, restore ecosystem processes and regenerate healthy, robust and resilient communities.
POINTS OF CONNECTION
System Thinking
Integrated Land and Water Planning
Applied Science
Implementation Tools
Pathways to Scaling up Solutions

PLANNERS & PRACTITIONERS
Ecologists & Scientists
Restoration & Water Engineers
Lawyers & Policy Experts
Program/Project Managers
Collaboration & Outreach

OUR SHARED FOCUS
Transformational solutions
Climate resiliency
Ecological integrity & wildlife
Colorado Water Plan & CO River Basin
Community health
Innovation and evolution
PARTNER BENEFITS

network connections, mission alignment and context within a shared vision, increased capacity, expanded reach, and leveraged resources

COMMON OUTCOMES

more equitable access to nature, healthier people and places

Become a partner! www.metrodna.org/join