

SAN LUIS VALLEY GREAT OUTDOORS



ANNUAL REPORT
2021





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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Dear San Luis Valley Community, Visitors, and Funders

Have you ever found a place that hurt your soul to leave? The SLV is that kind of place for many of us. Through our work across the Valley, we've seen how our communities are bonded by a shared love for this place we call home.

From the beginning, SLV GO! has had a broad scope, and our direction as a nonprofit is guided by the needs of each community we work in. We hope our projects make the places we live more desirable for kids to ride their bikes, families to walk their dogs, and for everyone to commune with the outdoors.

Through the many challenges presented in 2021, SLV GO! came out on top with new projects, programs, and a new staff member. We began working with the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Partnership Initiative to help find the balance between conservation and recreation throughout the SLV. We have also been continuing our work towards preserving one of our region's biggest and most beautiful assets: our dark skies. Our Great Outdoors Action Team finished their second successful season building and maintaining community trails and replanting in riparian areas and fencing when appropriate. Our Generation Wild partners provided opportunities for youth to be outside learning about environmental sciences and recreation. Plus, we became a partner in Alamosa County's Culture of Health Prize from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation highlighting community health initiatives.

2021 provided SLV GO! with more recognition and support than ever before. Our local communities are a driving force for the success of this organization, and I am so grateful to be part of such an important cause.



MICK DANIEL

Executive Director

ABOUT

San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLV GO!) was originally formed in 2013 as a coalition by a group of citizens, educators, and community leaders who recognized the tremendous opportunity to enhance recreational experiences, improve wellness, and connect the communities across the six-county region of the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. Today, SLV GO! has four full time staff members and a growing list of more than 140 volunteers and over 45 partners. SLV GO! gained 501(c)(3) status in April of 2018.



Practicing a collective impact model, we bring stakeholders together and provide leadership for effective collaboration among partners with shared goals. We are the only organization working collectively with nonprofits, businesses, federal agencies, and municipalities to improve health and quality of life via trails and outdoor recreation in the San Luis Valley.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide residents and visitors throughout the San Luis Valley with accessible and inclusive outdoor recreation opportunities that balance conservation, connect communities, improve wellness, encourage stewardship, and contribute to the economic vitality of the region.



10-YEAR PRIORITIES

1 Improve community wellness through enhanced in-town recreation facilities.

2 Connect, expand, and enhance trail systems throughout the San Luis Valley.

3 Grow more recreation programs and activities specifically tailored to San Luis Valley youth.

4 Expand water based recreation.

5 Expand opportunities for winter recreation.

6 Promote SLV's recreation opportunities and increase information sharing about what there is to see and do in the SLV.

MEET OUR TEAM



Mick Daniel
Executive Director

Mick is responsible for the day to day operations of SLV GO! and projects within the six counties of the San Luis Valley.



Patrick Ortiz
G.O.A.T.s Operations Director

Patrick is responsible for the planning and implementation of the projects that the SLV Great Outdoors Action Team (GOATs) works toward.



Dani Gronhovd
Community Connections Coordinator

Dani is responsible for building and sustaining local support for SLV GO! by engaging the constituents of the SLV in events, programs, services, and resources that SLV GO! provides.



Ellie Bollard
Development Coordinator - AmeriCorps VISTA

Ellie is responsible for fundraising initiatives and marketing for SLV GO! and coalition partners.

2021 MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2021 was a big year for SLV GO! in terms of advancing projects and programs for our local communities. Here are a few of our most exciting accomplishments:

1

Robert Wood Johnson Culture of Health Prize

Alamosa County won the prestigious Culture of Health Prize recognized as leading innovative efforts to advance health, opportunity, and equity. SLV GO! and the SLV Local Foods Coalition partnered to submit the application.

2

Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership Initiative

SLV GO! was selected as one of 7 coalitions to create a regional conservation and recreation master plan that will be incorporated into the state's revised master plan.

3

Colorado Health Foundation Grant Award

SLV GO! was awarded funding to advance healthy lifestyles in the San Luis Valley via outdoor recreation. It will fund an Outdoor Health Coordinator and the Embajadores program – outdoor trip leading for the Hispanic community.

2021 FUNDING

44

GRANTS
SUBMITTED



\$2.6MIL

TOTAL FUNDS
REQUESTED



756K

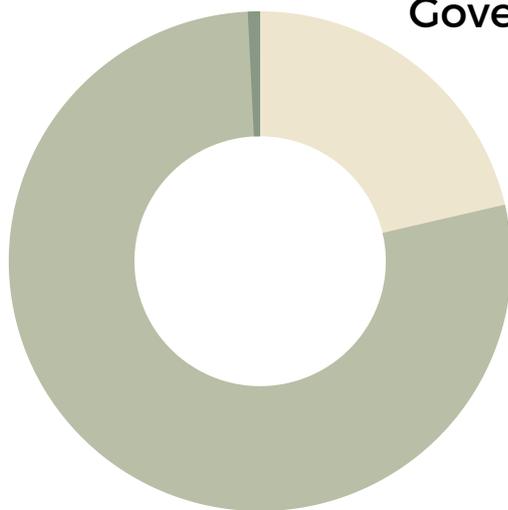
TOTAL FUNDS
RECEIVED

Individual Giving

1%

Government

21%



Foundations

78%

Grants Received

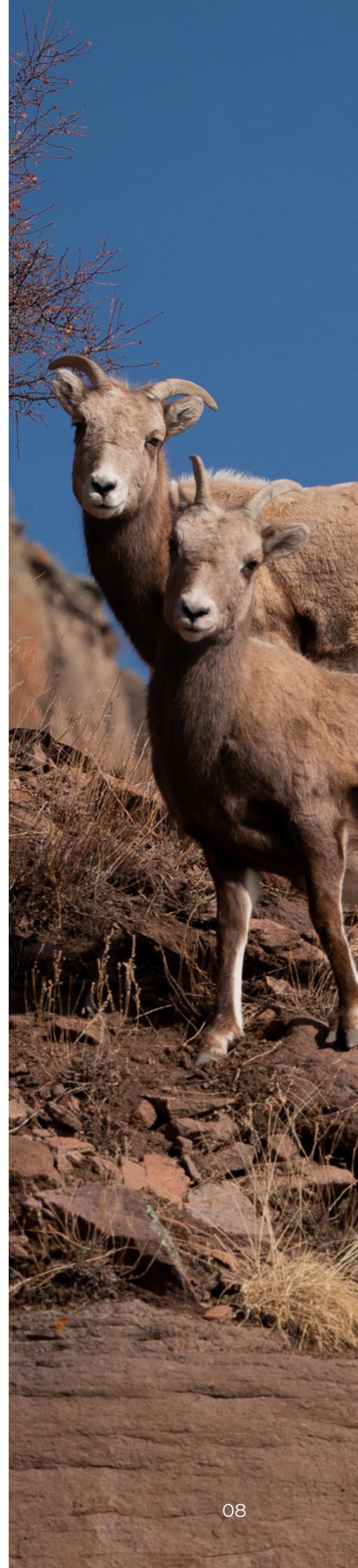
- Gates Family Foundation
- Kenneth King Foundation
- VF Foundation
- Xcel Energy Foundation
- Alamosa County Marketing
- Insperity
- Dreyfus Foundation
- CO Parks & Wildlife
- Athletic Brewing Co.
- NEEF
- Colorado Health Foundation
- Saguache County

GREAT OUTDOOR ACTION TEAM

In the summer of 2019, the SLV GO! Board of Directors decided to clarify the organization's focus and move into trail building. Before this decision, SLV GO! had funded nearly \$2,000,000 in trail projects; however, when the money started arriving for those projects, there was no mechanism for SLV GO! to receive those funds.

The Great Outdoor Action Team (GOATs) became that mechanism. It also became a trail building and maintenance team made up of San Luis Valley residents, a workforce development program for local community members who may otherwise have difficulty finding employment, and a social enterprise.

The GOATs launched in the late spring of 2020 and finished their second successful season in October 2021. The incredible team of men and women accomplished many diverse projects during the 2021 season.



G.O.A.T.S 2021 STATISTICS



G.O.A.T.S 2021 PROJECTS

- Completion of the Toivo Malm Trail in south Alamosa
- Tree plantings in Alamosa and Creede
- Alamosa River restoration and fence construction
- Trail opening in the Sangres
- Willow Lake trail maintenance on Saguache Ranger District
- Fee Tube installations for Saguache Ranger District
- Duck Lake trail maintenance
- Elk Creek Trail Maintenance
- Elkhorn Gulch trail renovations
- Monte Vista Wetlands trail construction
- 4 Rito Seco bridge installations



REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

In October of 2020, Governor Polis signed into Executive Order the creation of the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative (RPI). The RPI is a response to the state's burgeoning problems associated with dramatic increases in our State's population, tourism, and outdoor use. Colorado Parks and Wildlife, along with Great Outdoors Colorado, are funding regional collaboratives to work towards balancing conservation and recreation while ensuring equitable and sustainable access to outdoor recreation.

VISION

"The San Luis Valley is a place where conservation and recreation are balanced to create a landscape that preserves the natural and cultural resources, provides outdoor access for all people, and boosts the local economy."

The SLV GO! Coalition has convened local stakeholders from the conservation and recreation industry to identify conservation and recreation priorities and strategies in the San Luis Valley that will help inform a Statewide Conservation and Recreation Plan. So far, SLV GO! has held three coalition meetings taking place every other month since we were awarded this opportunity in July of 2021. Through these meetings we have been able to broaden our coalition members, develop a vision statement, and establish a set of project agreements. We are in the process of finalizing a coalition charter which includes decision-making processes and a governance structure to help guide the operation of the coalition into the future.

SANGRE DE CRISTO DARK SKY RESERVE

Overview

SLV GO! and partners throughout the San Luis Valley are collaborating to protect one of Southern-Central Colorado's most valuable resources: the night sky. Through community partnership and the establishment of light regulations, formal agreements, and long-term planning, SLV GO! intends to submit an application to the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) in November of 2022 to create the Sangre de Cristo Dark Sky Reserve (SdCDSR), which would become the world's largest dark sky designated area. In 2020, the SdCDSR Coalition was formed to bring community members, land agencies, and local organizations together to collaborate on this initiative purposed to combat light pollution, increase energy efficiency, enhance astro-tourism in the region, improve health and safety, and to protect the environment.

2021 Progress

Spearheaded by SLV GO!, partners are all helping take sky quality measurements to substantiate the dark skies of the region in order to meet standards required by the IDA for the dark sky reserve designation. The SdCDSR Lighting Management Plan (LMP) was developed this year which is intended to guide the selection, placement, installation, and operation of all new and replacement/retrofitted light in the Reserve, as well as provide guidelines for municipalities, counties, and public and private entities that choose to partake in this dark sky initiative. The Coalition is working to connect local officials to resources that can help lead them through the process of adopting a dark sky lighting ordinance. Substantial community outreach and engagement was conducted via events and presentations to local city and county officials, home owner and property owner associations, and ranching enterprises for the purpose of introducing the Sangre de Cristo Dark Sky Reserve project, explaining the benefits of dark skies, to gain interest, and spur future engagement in our efforts. The collaborative work of the coalition exemplifies the collective commitment to protect and preserve the dark skies of Southern-Central Colorado and to share them with the public.

REVITALIZE THE RIO

Revitalize the Rio (RtR) is a community-driven initiative working toward activating the Rio Grande corridor in Alamosa, Colorado. This initiative aligns with long-term goals for better community health and well-being which helps increase overall livability. Community members work together and implement projects that help Alamosa residents become healthier, thrive economically, promote civic and cultural vitality, and steward the Rio Grande to better connect the population to their outdoor recreational opportunities.

“

This group is such a unique, diverse mix of organizations all working towards a similar vision. I really appreciate everyone's efforts and love being a part of it.

-Suzanne Beauchaine
National Wildlife Refuge Manager

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This year, 45 community volunteers attended two community planning meetings where priority projects were identified:

1. Park Rx: SLV GO! will hire a Health & Wellness Coordinator to work with local hospitals to get patients prescribed outdoor time.
2. Embajadores: Leaders from the Hispanic community will be hired to lead outdoor trips.
3. Increasing access to open space by connecting neighborhoods via trails.

On top of this, RtR constructed two boat ramps on the Rio Grande corridor, collaborate with Alamosa Parks & Recreation to put on the Rio Trio Triathlon, and hosted a Toivo Malm Trail riverbank restoration work day.



GENERATION WILD

In 2020, the RIO Inspire and SLV Inspire coalitions merged to become San Luis Valley Generation Wild (SLV GenWild). In several sessions throughout the year, the nine SLV GenWild partners, including SLV GO!, worked with Civic Canopy on strategic planning to redefine the focus of the coalition and create a 5 year roadmap designed with the interest of getting youth outside. SLV GenWild was awarded 1.9 million dollars from Great Outdoors Colorado to be allocated across all 9 partners for GenWild programming and capacity.

Highlights this year include the grand opening of the Farm Park Education Center and the Rio Trio event in Alamosa where all partners set up educational booths. The coalition began to implement strategic planning that was laid out in 2020 which resulted in roughly 5,000 youth being served with ages ranging from Pre-K through college.

Coalition Partners

- San Luis Valley Great Outdoors
- City of Alamosa Parks & Recreation
- Rio Grande Farm Park
- Rio Grande Watershed Conservation & Education Initiative
- Adams State Adventure Program
- Alpine Achievers Initiative
- Boys & Girls Club of the SLV
- City of Creede Parks & Recreation
- SLV Rattlers
- Alamosa Bicycle Coalition
- Caminos del Valle
- Southwest Conservation Crew.



TIERA GUEREÑA
Program Coordinator

Tiera Guereña was hired in January 2021 as the first Program Coordinator. Tiera spearheaded the GenWild fundraising campaign called Kids Grow Better Outside, organized marketing outreach for all coalition partner programming, developed the GO! Cast (SLV GO! podcast), and coordinated all coalition meetings and events.



San Luis Valley

COALITION PARTNERS

The SLV GO! Coalition has 45 partners from local organizations, businesses, and municipal, state and federal government agencies.

Council of Governments

- Mineral County
- Costilla County
- Saguache County
- Alamosa County
- La Jara
- Creede
- South Fork
- Monte Vista
- Del Norte
- San Luis
- Saguache
- Crestone
- Alamosa

Public Land Agencies

- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife
- National Wildlife Refuges
- Bureau of Land Management
- Great Sand Dunes National Park
- Colorado State Forest
- Colorado State Parks and Wildlife

Other Partners

- Moving Mountains
- OREC Office
- Western Rivers
- Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado
- Southwest Conservation Corps
- Headwaters Alliance
- Conejos Clean Water
- Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
- Walk2Connect
- San Luis Valley Development Resources Group
- Rio Grande Farm Park
- Eastern San Luis Valley Trails
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust
- Kristi's Mountain Sports
- Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council
- SLV Small Business Development Center
- SLV Ecosystem Council
- Del Norte Trails Organization
- Local Foods Coalition
- Wright Challenge
- Trout Unlimited
- CPW State Trail Planning Grant Review Committee
- USFS Divide Roundtable on Trails

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The operations of SLV GO! would not be possible without the outstanding support we receive from our partners, local communities, and donors. We are very appreciative of everyone who has demonstrated their commitment to the success of SLV GO! this past year, with a special thanks to:

- The SLV GO! Board of Directors
- Linda Malm – benefactor of the Toivo Malm Trail Network
- The SLV G.O.A.T.s
- Our 45 coalition partners
- Travis Stoker - photographer for this report

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to the wellbeing of the San Luis Valley.

Contact

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