

# COLORADO WILDLIFE COUNCIL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

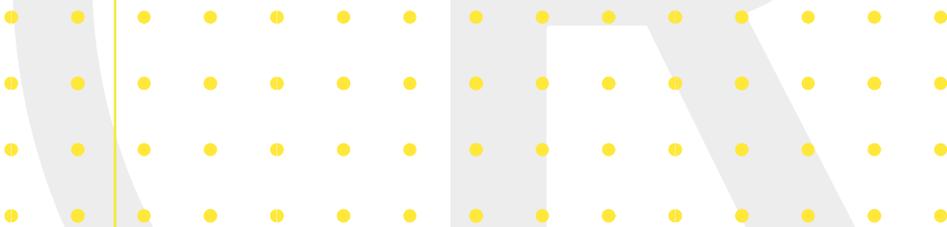
October 25, 2018  
R&R Partners – Strategy & Insight  
<https://www.rpartners.com/>

## BACKGROUND

Enjoyment of Colorado's natural beauty, including hunting and angling, has long been a part of the state's cultural heritage. However, the state is rapidly changing, and more and more Colorado residents are transplants from other places who may not have grown up around a culture of hunting and fishing. In fact, 57% of Coloradans were born out of state, including 11% of Coloradans who were born in another country. And contrary to the view some may have of Colorado as a largely rural state, 85% of Coloradans live in the Pueblo-to-Fort Collins urban corridor formed by Interstate 25.

Rural and native Coloradans may have grown up around a culture of hunting and angling, but transplants and urban dwellers may not be familiar with the benefits of hunting and fishing. They may even be avid enjoyers of outdoor activities, like hiking and skiing, but they may not understand that even though they don't hunt and fish, that these activities have beneficial impacts for the state's economy and environment.

As more and more Colorado voters become removed from hunting and fishing, there is a risk that these activities will become vulnerable to unfriendly legislation in the state legislature or ballot initiatives. In this case, the best defense is a good offense. We believe it is crucial to aggressively communicate the benefits of hunting and fishing to those Coloradans who may not have yet formed a strong opinion on the matter now, so that in the event of a future ballot initiative we won't need to persuade them because they will already be well informed.





## RESEARCH APPROACH

As we see it, the overall goals of this exploratory research are two-fold:

- 1) First, we will develop a comprehensive attitudinal, demographic and psychographic landscape of where voters fall on hunting and fishing issues in Colorado, with a particular focus on those Coloradans who may not have an opinion one way or the other and are key persuasion targets.
- 2) Create a full messaging architecture for the Colorado Wildlife Council (CWC) to use when promoting hunting and fishing that appeals both to hunters and anglers as well as those not familiar with these activities, especially younger transplants and people in urban areas.

To deliver the greatest value, we believe the research plan for CWC needs to be:

- ✓ An **iterative** research design where each stage informs subsequent stages, building on what we already know and getting closer to the core values and attitudinal fault lines that matter to our key targets in Colorado as well as voters overall.
- ✓ A **robust** combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand how Coloradans speak and act, think about this issue from a 360-degree perspective, unearth insights a more traditional research agenda might miss and rigorously question our own findings so we don't follow an incorrect lead or submit to confirmation bias.
- ✓ **Strategic and forward-looking** to keep us a step ahead of the conversation, so we are setting the context (not responding to it) and able to anticipate challenges before they arise.
- ✓ **Dynamic and nimble** so we can quickly get the answers we need and adapt our tactics to the evolving issue dynamics.
- ✓ **Actionable** so we can turn insights into results.

With the goal of gaining a foundational understanding of Colorado's mindset and political landscape surrounding environmental issues, particularly hunting and fishing, the following program represents a research strategy that will provide CWC with the insight to develop a comprehensive messaging strategy to shore up base supporters and also persuade those in the middle to your side. Below outlines our recommended research plan. There is a base level option as well as plus up considerations pending budget allocations.



## METHODOLOGY

All phases of the research would be conducted among two groups:

- 1) A representative sample of Colorado registered voters
- 2) The “In the Wind” group identified by previous research, namely persuadable Coloradans who may not have yet formed an opinion around hunting and fishing issues.

While we believe the In the Wind group is our core persuasion target and will want to primarily focus messaging to them, we need to ensure that CWC’s messaging aimed at In the Wind doesn’t come with any pitfalls – namely alienating the base supporters or motivating your opponents to act against you. For that reason, it is crucial to include registered voters overall in the research to act as a control group.

The following represents the necessary components of a research program that will provide CWC with a comprehensive messaging architecture that bolsters the importance of hunting and fishing in the minds of Colorado voters.

1. **Online Ethno-Journaling**, to help us establish a “language” in which to speak to voters in a way that is relevant and compelling. Additionally, these ethno-journals will allow us to dig deep into Colorado voters’ mindset to reveal the emotions, values, and attitudes that underpin their views of hunting and fishing and uncover the building blocks of messaging themes that will resonate with them.
2. **Courtroom Focus Groups**, to observe the natural evolution of arguments for and against various hunting and fishing issues in Coloradans’ own words, as well as identify what motivates the most passionate supporters/rejecters and moves “switchers” – ultimately enabling us to craft truly resonant messages.
3. **Tracking and Messaging Poll**, to develop and test what messages and proof points are most credible and potent – both in isolation and up against competitive messaging. This survey will include the tracking questions from previous research waves and will enhance it, providing both a landscape of where voters are on the issues that matter most to CWC but also the best messages to use to move voters to your side.
4. **Creative Concept Testing**, to evaluate the impact of advertising and communications. These focus groups will allow us to fine-tune messaging prior to the creative campaign, and get a smart read on Coloradans’ reactions to creative content. Further, they offer invaluable qualitative responses that allow us to dial in on what ads will move voters on the key metrics we need to win.

This foundational research program will equip you with the insights and direction you need to understand where Coloradans are when it comes to environmental issues. With the completion of this research we will deliver to you a strategic roadmap, including:

- ✓ A thorough analysis of the political and attitudinal landscape in Colorado around environmental issues – the key values core and attitudes around hunting and fishing.



- ✓ A detailed assessment of the electorate, identifying those who support, oppose and are undecided on various hunting and fishing issues.
- ✓ A cohesive messaging architecture to guide and inform your communications, so you know when to say what, to whom, in order to persuade and activate them.

### Online Ethno-Journaling

Our first step would be an exploratory investigation into the underlying values and beliefs that shape the way Coloradans view the world around them, and specifically how they apply to hunting and fishing. We would approach these topics from a non-political, psychographic lens to allow us to fully understand Coloradans core values and beliefs in their own context and in their own words.

To this end, R&R will partner with a third-party vendor who has developed a proprietary ethno-journaling methodology that allows respondents to answer multi-layered questions in a private setting, offering far more depth than focus groups or even one-on-one interviews. In addition, the open-ended nature of this tool encourages participants to speak freely and candidly about the deeply personal issues that are affecting their lives, lending us rare insights into their experiences, their emotions, their hopes and their concerns.

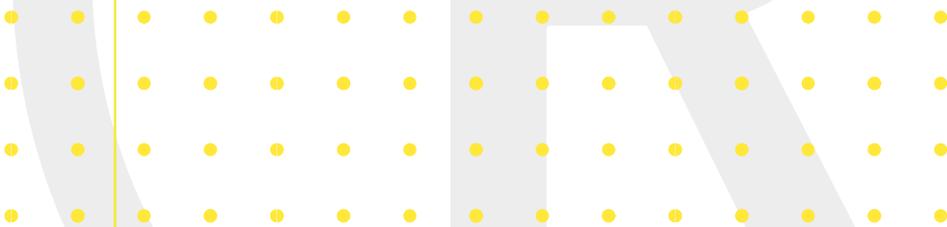
The findings from this initial research will help us begin to construct a compelling narrative for framing various environmental issues in a way that reflects the core values that Coloradans themselves hold. And, from these exercises we will be able to identify the attitudinal fault lines that determine on which side of issues they break.

Specifically, we would aim to:

- ✓ Break down Coloradans' views into emotional and psychological building blocks that can be used to construct a message that resonates strongly.
- ✓ Explore at a deep level the core values that inform Coloradans' decisions about their lives and, specifically, hunting and fishing.
- ✓ Ground our understanding of the issue (and our messaging) in participants' own language and personal contexts.
- ✓ Examine Coloradans' media habits and perceptions of trusted sources to identify how and where to intercept them effectively in the contemporary "post-truth" landscape.

### *Recommended Specs*

We recommend conducting 4 rounds of ethno-journals with 40 Coloradans – 20 registered voters and 20 In the Wind respondents. Registered voters would be selected to reflect Colorado's demographic, ideological and regional makeup. This online methodology allows us to recruit from across the state, ensuring the perspectives of Coloradans in the major population centers around Denver as well as rural county voters are represented.





## *Deliverables*

At the conclusion of the ethno-journals, we will produce a report that provides an in-depth view into Coloradans' mindsets and a nuanced understanding of the core values and beliefs that shape their views of Colorado environmental issues, particularly hunting and fishing. The insights and learnings from this project will heavily inform the structure and content of the Courtroom Focus Groups that follow.

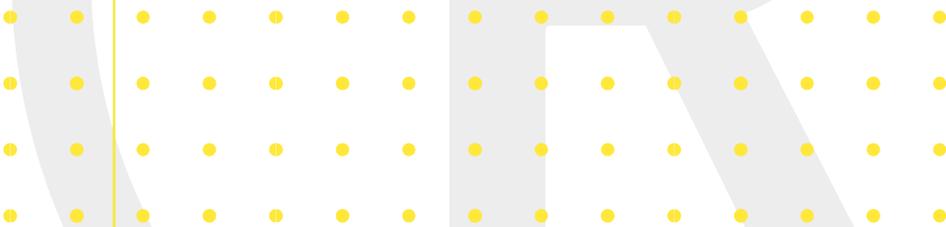
### **Courtroom Qualitative Groups**

In the next stage of this iterative process, we will conduct “courtroom” qualitative groups. Unlike traditional focus groups, this format will require participants to formulate cases, field tough questions, and debate the merits and drawbacks of hunting and fishing issues – using the arguments and evidence that they themselves find to be most compelling. This methodology is particularly useful in this case as we’re attempting to communicate with low-information groups and the discussion will be more fruitful if they are given arguments and materials to react to.

This approach pits two opposing audiences against each other, offering us a glimpse into their thought processes as they work to develop an argument that will win over an undecided jury. This exercise reveals to us not only the messages that appeal to Coloradans who are on the fence, but also the arguments partisans use that can show us a way to reach them. Observing how they put the pieces together will expose to us the beliefs that underpin their positions on hunting and fishing issues – and that may repel any attempts at persuasion. Once we know what these barriers are, we can develop targeted messaging that focuses on breaking down or overriding them.

Here’s how these groups work:

- ✓ We will conduct three, 20 to 30-minute mini-groups among supporters and opponents of specified hunting and fishing related issues relevant in Colorado, with each side arguing their case. These groups help warm up the participants, getting them thinking deeply on the topic and discussing any relevant information that bolsters their argument.
- ✓ The top participants from the mini-groups are invited to participate in a mock trial, where they act as the “lawyers” to argue their case in front of a “jury” of undecided or “soft” voters.
- ✓ At the end, the jury will debate the issues and decide which side “wins” on each of the topics covered. Once the jury has reached a decision, the jury must explain their verdict to the lawyers. The entire group then can engage in a discussion where lawyers from both sides can ask questions about how the jury arrived at its decision.
- ✓ Throughout this process, the moderator will serve to keep the conversation on track, but discussion is largely left to participants.





Our goals for these groups would be to:

- ✓ Observe the natural evolution of the debate around hunting and fishing issues from argument formulation to internalization (or rejection).
- ✓ Understand the language and proof points that Coloradans use to defend their stance on this issue, as well as the values and attitudes that drive their beliefs.
- ✓ Understand which arguments from other perspectives you may need to inoculate against and identify the barriers to persuasion.
- ✓ Ensure these arguments hold up in a competitive context when directly challenged.

#### *Recommended Specs*

We recommend conducting two rounds of courtroom groups, one with registered voters and one with the In the Wind group.

#### *Deliverable*

The report coming out of this stage in the research program will provide an assessment of how Coloradans perceive the most robust arguments around hunting and fishing issues. Insights from this stage will then be tested quantitatively across a larger representative sample of Coloradans via quantitative polling in the next phase of the research.

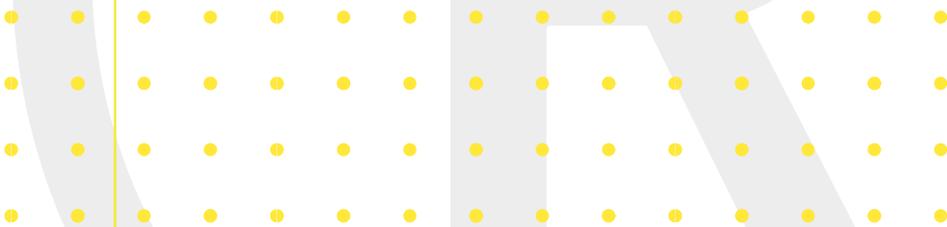
### **Quantitative Tracking And Messaging Poll**

Building off our qualitative research, we will conduct an extensive messaging poll to quantitatively test and determine the themes, language, proof points and messages CWC can use to establish yourself as a trusted source of information about hunting and fishing issues in Colorado and what to say to bring persuadable voters to your side.

Based on the phases that will have come before, we will develop 3-4 overall messaging frames to test on both credibility and persuasiveness. Since Coloradans don't hear messages in a vacuum we will present multiple arguments from across the political spectrum to accurately determine how our message fares in a crowded space. In addition, respondents will hear a battery of proof points to back each frame up. We will use open-ended questions to determine from voters which arguments are most salient, potent and impactful.

In this phase, our objectives are to:

- ✓ Continue the tracking research from previous waves.
- ✓ Isolate the concise, powerful phrases and constructions you can use to capture the conversation and boost CWC's reputation.
- ✓ Explain why each phrase resonates with your target "persuadable" Coloradans.
- ✓ Determine the most resonant proof-points that give you a foothold into Coloradans' hearts and minds.





- ✓ Tagline testing and development: Test whether the “Hug a hunter” and “Hug an angler” taglines are working, with who, and if needed, test potential other taglines to see if they can improve upon what CWC is currently using.
- ✓ Evaluate CWC’s effectiveness as a credible messenger.
- ✓ Ultimately, refine a set of messaging principles that will inform the “dos and don’ts” of CWC’s communications strategy.

#### *Recommended specs*

20-minute online survey with n=1200 Coloradans: 600 registered voters and 600 ‘In the Wind’ respondents.

#### *Deliverable*

After this survey, we will provide you with topline survey results as well as an in-depth report on the messaging dynamics around hunting and fishing issues in Colorado.

In addition, we will develop an initial messaging architecture and the tools to translate our insights into an actionable messaging strategy (what to say, when and how to say it, and why it works), which will include:

- ✓ *Messaging “do’s and don’ts”*: We will provide clear advice on what words and phrases resonate and what language falls flat and should be avoided.
- ✓ *Messaging nuances*: The messaging architecture we deliver includes supporting messages and proof points that make the core message relevant for (or at minimum, doesn’t alienate) any of the audiences that are important to our strategy
- ✓ *Messaging toolkit*: The true power of messaging builds as stakeholders adopt it and adapt it for their ongoing communications. We will develop a messaging toolkit that can be used over time and through situational developments to tell your story.

#### **Creative Concept Testing**

After the exploratory research phase and creative development have been completed, we will conduct creative concept testing focus groups to evaluate the impact of advertising and communications. These focus groups will allow us to fine-tune messaging prior to the creative campaign, and get a smart read on Coloradans’ reactions to creative content. Further, they offer invaluable qualitative responses that allow us to dial in on what ads will move voters on the key metrics we need to win.

Our goals for these groups would be to:

- ✓ Assess overall effectiveness and perceptions of the creative campaigns
- ✓ Understand comprehension and retention
- ✓ Uncover overall likes/dislikes
- ✓ Identify the most relevant and salient components



- ✓ Determine the motivation/effectiveness of the message
- ✓ Explore the impact on brand perceptions, as well as perceptions of hunting and fishing

#### *Recommended specs*

We recommend conducting six focus groups (three/day), with a mix of groups identified as In The Wind and groups identified as registered voters.

#### *Deliverable*

The report coming out of this phase will provide key insights into how Coloradoans perceive the creative campaigns. Insights gained from these focus groups will be used to help fine-tune the creative concepts and provide strategic recommendations on how to proceed with the creative campaign.

#### **Additional Research Recommendation**

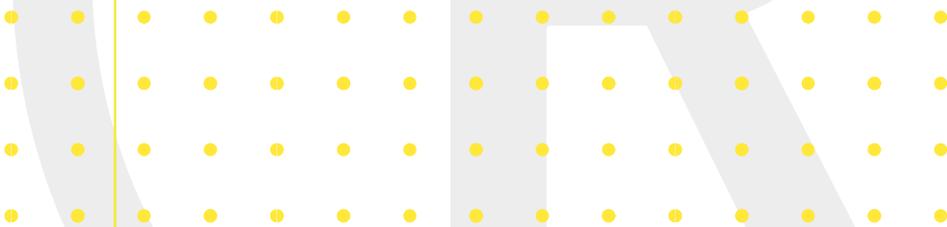
If there is a potential for a larger research budget, there are several ways we think the project could be enhanced. Below outlines what we recommend including to enhance the work beyond the foundational research.

#### **Video Chats/Recordings as part Ethno-Journals**

The Ethno-Journals provide a great forum to have respondents think about and react to fairly provocative and in-depth questions, providing us with an insight into their issues and thinking, as well as a sense of the language, or words they use. But by including a video-chat component to this methodology, we can get a much more rounded perspective, as we can see respondents' facial expressions as they talk about various topics, we can *hear* inflections in respondents' voice and tone as articulate how they are feeling, and we can obtain more unfiltered opinions and views that come straight from the mind to mouth. This approach also allows us to have respondents undertake various tasks, like upload photos, images or videos that represent them, we can ask them to take videos of certain aspects of their home or life and then speak to them, we can have them record themselves watching a video or image of our choice (like any advertising) to "watch" their reactions in real-time, and then discuss with them.

#### **Exploratory Focus Groups**

While the ethnographic journals will give us deep insight into the attitudes and values of our key groups, we can learn even more about them by seeing how they react in a public situation. Hunting and fishing can touch on some extremely polarizing issues and emotions. Groups like these, especially if conducted prior to the quantitative message test, would allow us to understand how informed various groups are, where the hot-buttons are – and where there may be some common ground. They would also allow us to explore some potential



messaging themes, providing us an ability to optimize the messages before quantitative testing.

#### **Expanded survey and larger sample size**

We could expand the survey from 20 to 25 minutes in length. This would allow us the option to explore more issues and engage in other research methodologies. For example, we could conduct isolated, competitive message testing, or an attack/response test where we present our message and see how it fares against numerous attacks from the other side. We would also recommend an increased sample size from n=1200 to n=1600, which would allow us to conduct even deeper subgroup analysis and, because the sample will be split in some cases to monadically test messaging, it would allow us to test more messages.

#### **Live chats with respondents during survey**

As mentioned previously, we can intercept respondents as they are taking the quantitative survey to ask in depth questions to get the “why” behind their answers.



## **TIMING & NEXT STEPS**

In order to conduct the research recommended in this proposal, the Colorado Wildlife Council members will need to provide approval on the November 2, 2018 conference call. We can then begin the work immediately.

