Metro Denver Nature Alliance

Presentation to DRCOG Civic Academy

Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Introductions

Metro DNA Presenter:
Sara Rose “Sa’ro” Tannenbaum



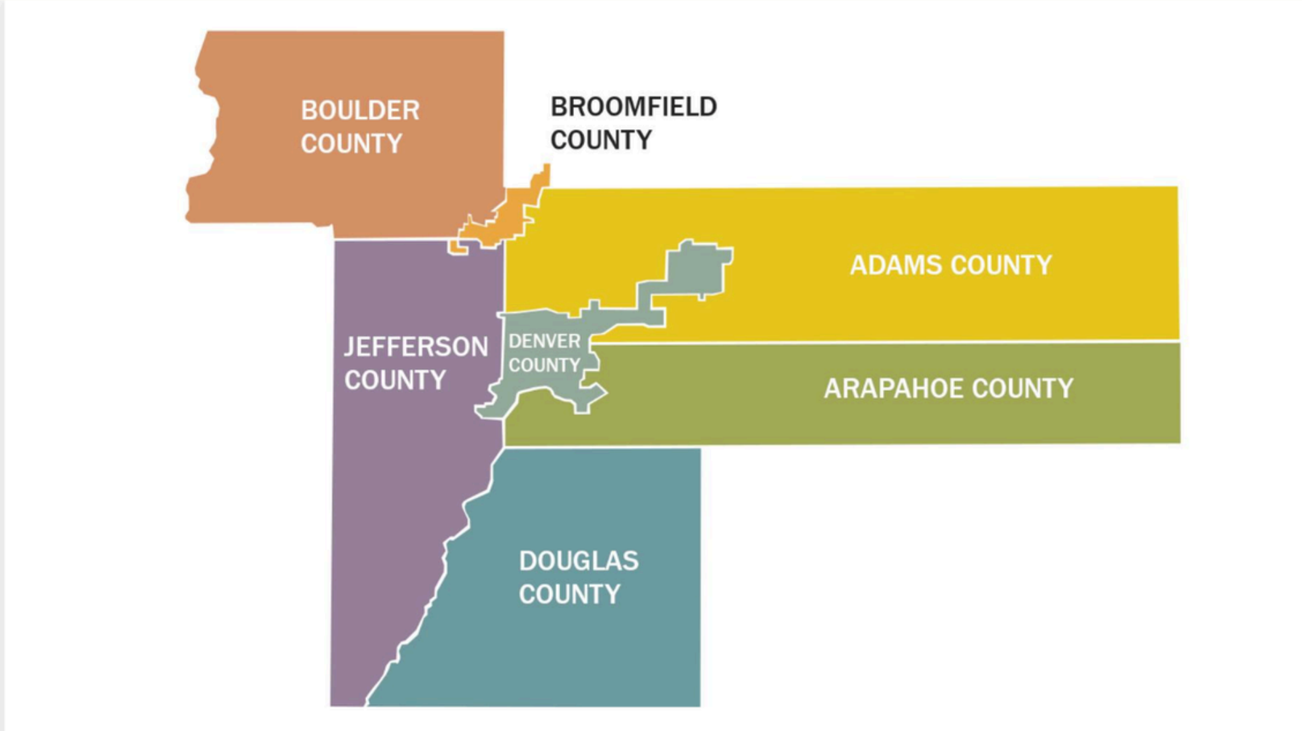
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Metro DNA (Metro Denver Nature Alliance) **aligns** nature-based efforts to ensure **more equitable access to nature** and to **promote healthy people, communities, and natural places**.

7- County Region:

Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson

- **822,473 acres of public land** (28%)
- 2 million acres of private land
- **135.8% increase in population** from 2010-2022
- **98.4% Land Disturbance Rate**, including from mining, oil and gas wells, energy development, urban development, agriculture and roads
- **17-62%** Range of land that is considered **High Priority Habitat**



Organizational Structure

- **Executive Committee:** primary governing body
- **Regional Vision Implementation Committee:** county, state, federal land managers
- **Partners Network:**
  - more than 70 cross-sector partner organizations (non-profit, government, academic, and private sector)
  - convene biannually
- **Contracted work:** including an administrative lead and a Regional Vision lead consultant



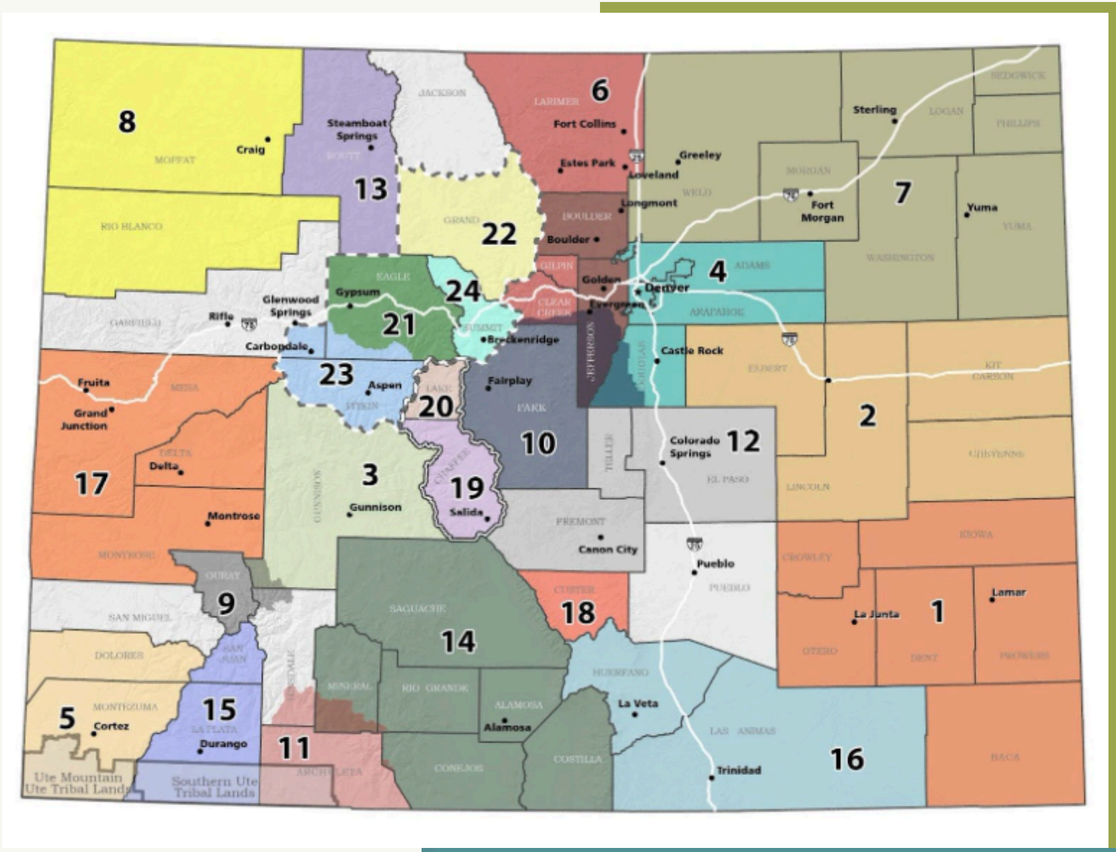
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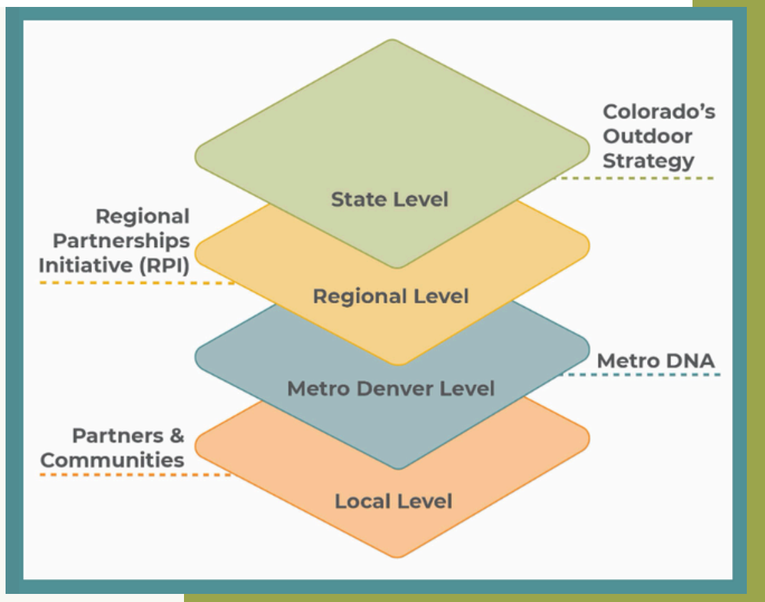
Metro DNA’s Work to Date

Beginnings

- **2015:** Metro DNA formed
- **2018:** Metro DNA became a part of the Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership Initiative (CPW and GOCO)

a statewide initiative and grant program that advances regionally driven collaboratives working to ensure that Colorado's land, water and wildlife thrive while also providing equitable access to quality outdoor recreation experiences





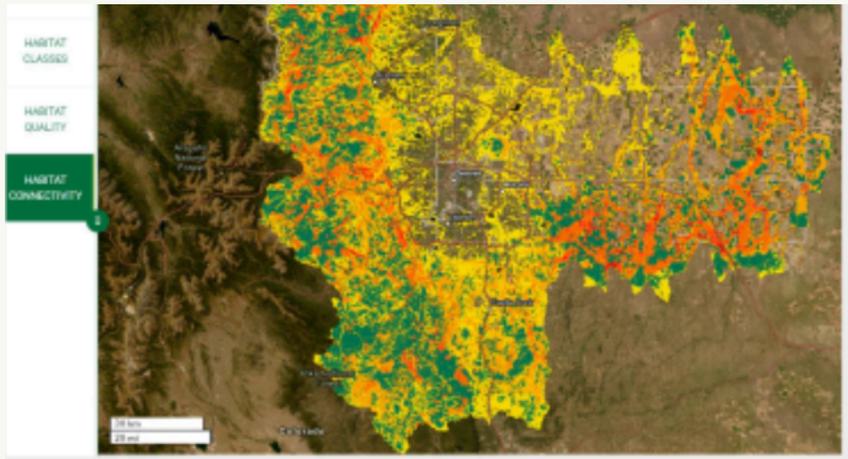
Projects

- **2019-2022:** Regional Conservation Assessment
- **2021-2023:** Regional Equity Assessment
- **2023-Present:** Regional Vision Demonstration Projects (14 total)
- **2024-2026:** Regional Vision for People and Nature development
- **2026-Present:** Regional Vision Implementation



Regional Conservation Assessment

An analysis developed by Metro DNA, The Nature Conservancy, and Biohabitats that identifies high-priority places in the seven-county metro Denver region to protect, connect, restore, and enhance for people and nature.



Web Map & Report Generator



RCA Technical Report 2022

Regional Equity Assessment

Created to address inequities in nature resulting from discrimination, segregation, trauma, and environmental injustice in the Metro Denver area.

Metro DNA encourages members, stakeholders, and policymakers to use this tool to inform future policy, advocacy, and investment, advancing equitable access to nature.



Developing a Regional Vision

Regional Equity Assessment

Regional Conservation Assessment

Community Engagement & Backround Research

Regional Vision For People and Nature

The seven-county Metro Denver region will be a thriving region where:

- everyone has access to green spaces, healthy air, waters and habitats;
- where communities, governments, and organizations are supported by sustained financial investments; and
- where all work collaboratively together towards shared goals to protect landscapes, restore ecosystems, and support equitable programs for people and nature.

Background Research

Partner Engagement:

- Executive Committee Interviews
- Steering Committee Focus Group
- Partners Network Focus Group
- Regional Demonstration Project Interviews

County and Municipal Plan Analysis

- Analyzed 42 relevant plans against Metro DNA's six dimensions of equity, habitat quality, and connectivity



Community Engagement

Interest Groups

- Agriculture and Private Landowners
- County government agencies (community planning & development; parks & recreation; open spaces; public works; etc.)
- People with Disabilities
- Conservation groups
- Cultural Institutions
- Environmental Justice groups
- Funders
- General Public
- Homebuilders
- Indigenous and Native American Organizations
- Indigenous Youth
- Landscape Architects
- Local/Municipal Government Agencies
- Outdoor Recreation Affinity Groups
- Outdoor Recreation User Groups
- Sportspeople
- State Agencies
- Utilities
- Water Providers
- Wildlife groups
- Youth/Education Groups

Community Engagement

Community Engagement Period
December 2024-August 2025

- Direct outreach for public engagement process sent to 325+ individuals
- People Engaged/Participated: 250+
- Entities represented: 118
- Focus Groups conducted: 19 (154 participants)
- Interviews conducted: 18 (28 participants)
- General Public Survey responses: 62 (open survey)
- Outdoor Recreation Survey responses: 10 (invite only survey)
- Culmination events: 4



Accessible & Connected Nature

Green spaces, trails, parks, waterways and wildlife corridors are easy to reach and linked across the region, supporting recreation, mobility, and ecological health.

Community Identity & Wellbeing

Nature strengthens local identity, culture, mental and physical health, community connections, and overall quality of life.



Biodiversity & Stewardship

Residents value protecting ecosystems – especially native wildlife and plants – taking shared responsibility for sustaining natural heritage for future generations.

Equity & Inclusion

Shared decision-making and resources enable nature to be welcoming, affordable, and accessible to people of all ages, abilities, incomes, and backgrounds.

Collaboration & Investment

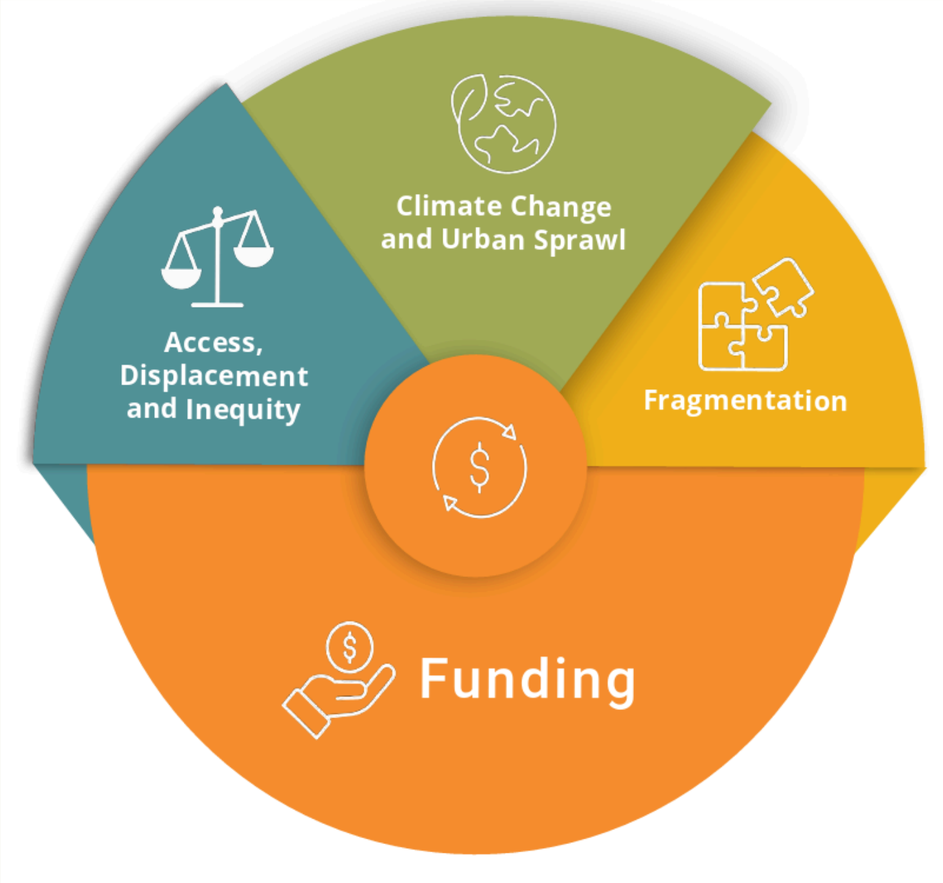
Cross-jurisdictional partnerships, collective action, and policy and financial investments strengthen conservation, accessibility, and inclusive programming for all communities.

Sustainable Growth & Resilience

Development balances human needs with ecological health, integrates climate resilience, and promotes native and regionally appropriate landscaping and well-planned growth.

Challenges to Achieving Regional Vision

- **Access, displacement and inequity:** persistent barriers to outdoor recreation and nature access for the communities most affected by historic and ongoing disparities, along with underrepresentation in sector leadership
- **Climate change and urban sprawl:** wildfires, floods, drought, and heatwaves straining infrastructure, public health, and habitat across the region
- **Fragmentation:** uncoordinated conservation efforts across jurisdictions leading to duplication and missed opportunities for collective impact
- **Funding:** reliable support for legacy local projects but limited flexible funding for regional, grassroots, and cross-jurisdictional work



Regional Vision Demonstration Projects

- Launched 2023 to fund projects that catalyze habitat protection and equitable access to nature across the region
- Six projects funded in 2023-2024, eight in 2025
- Selected by the Executive and Steering Committees, prioritizing existing members and near-complete projects







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Regional Vision Demonstration Projects

2024 Demo Project: Daniels Park – Medicine Wheel Garden
(Denver Zoo Conservation Alliance)

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Regional Vision Demonstration Projects

2024 Demo Project: Bear Creek Greenway
(Groundwork Denver)

Link to 2026 Demo Projects

2026 Demo Projects

What’s next: what does it mean to be a regional convener?

- Moving from planning into implementation
  - *Cross-jurisdictional work through our Implementation Committee*
- Ongoing research
  - *Gap analysis to guide future priority investments*
- Partnerships
  - *Accessible Trail Guide with two other RPI’s*
- Building our governance structure and internal capacity
  - *Exploring fiscal sponsorships*



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Thank you and Q&A