A BILL FOR AN ACT

CONCERNING IMPROVEMENTS TO STATE PARKS, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at http://leg.colorado.gov.)

The bill transfers $10,000,000 from the general fund to the capital construction fund to develop infrastructure to open a state park on the property surrounding Fishers Peak and to accommodate additional visitors at other state parks. Money appropriated to the department of natural resources is available to the department for 3 years, after which any unexpended and unencumbered money reverts back to the capital
construction fund.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:

SECTION 1. Short title. The short title of this act is the "I Love Colorado State Parks Act".

SECTION 2. Legislative declaration. (1) The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that:

(a) Colorado is legendary for its outdoor recreation opportunities, and state parks provide an important gateway for Colorado citizens and visitors to experience the outdoors in a safe, family-friendly environment;

(b) The state's population is rapidly growing, and ninety percent of Coloradans participate in outdoor recreation activities. Overall, outdoor recreation contributes sixty-two billion dollars to Colorado's economy, and the industry pays twenty-one billion dollars annually in wages and salaries.

(c) Colorado's state park system accommodates more than fifteen million visitor days each year and contributes one billion two hundred million dollars annually to the state's economy. Visitation at state parks has grown steadily over the last five years, with a net increase of more than two million two hundred thousand visitor days from fiscal year 2014-15 through fiscal year 2018-19, and maintenance and capacity improvements have not kept up with this significant growth in demand.

(d) To address these visitation challenges, Senate Bill 18-143, the "Hunting, Fishing, and Parks for Future Generations Act" enacted in 2018, set a goal for Colorado Parks and Wildlife to identify and plan the development of a new state park. Colorado has not opened a new state park since Staunton State Park in 2013, and the state park system has lost
acreage in the past decade.

(e) The Fishers Peak property in Las Animas county was identified as Colorado's next state park through a partnership between the city of Trinidad, Great Outdoors Colorado, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, and Colorado parks and wildlife. The property provides an iconic backdrop to the city of Trinidad and presents a rare opportunity to benefit the local economy, achieve landscape-level conservation, and provide recreational access to more than thirty square miles of public land.

(f) In addition to developing new state parks, Colorado parks and wildlife must prevent Colorado's existing forty-one state parks from being "loved to death" by investing in infrastructure and maintenance to improve the visitor experience and increase capacity.

SECTION 3. In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-75-302, amend (2)(hh) and (2)(ii); and add (2)(jj) as follows:

24-75-302. Capital construction fund - capital assessment fees - calculation - information technology capital account. (2) The controller shall transfer a sum as specified in this subsection (2) from the general fund to the capital construction fund as money becomes available in the general fund during the fiscal year beginning on July 1 of the fiscal year in which the transfer is made. Transfers between funds pursuant to this subsection (2) are not appropriations subject to the limitations of section 24-75-201.1. The amounts transferred pursuant to this subsection (2) are as follows:

(hh) For the 2019-20 fiscal year, one hundred seventy-eight thousand four hundred seventy-one dollars pursuant to H.B. 19-1250, enacted in 2019; and
(ii) For the 2019-20 state fiscal year, one hundred ten thousand six hundred fifty-two dollars pursuant to S.B. 19-172, enacted in 2019; and


SECTION 4. Capital construction appropriation. (1) For the 2019-20 state fiscal year, $6,000,000 is appropriated to the department of natural resources for use by the division of parks and wildlife. This appropriation is from the capital construction fund created in section 24-75-302, C.R.S. To implement this act, the division of parks and wildlife may use this appropriation for:

(a) Capital construction related to infrastructure development projects to facilitate the opening to the public of a state park surrounding Fishers Peak in Las Animas County; and

(b) Capital construction related to infrastructure improvements and maintenance to address increased visitation at other state parks.

(2) The appropriations made in subsection (1) of this section are available upon passage of this act, and if any appropriation project is initiated within the fiscal year, the appropriation for the project remains available until completion of the project or for three years, whichever comes first, at which time the unexpended and unencumbered balances revert to the capital construction fund.

SECTION 5. Safety clause. The general assembly hereby finds, determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.