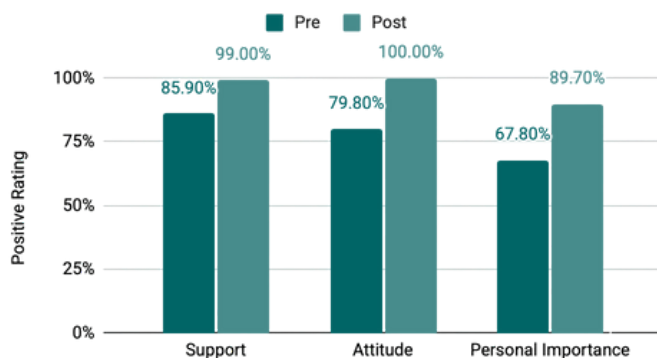


Key Insights: Outcomes of a Statewide Outreach Campaign for Wolverine Restoration in Colorado

By Kaitlyn Schneider, Rockies and Plains Representative - Defenders of Wildlife; Kaitlyn Reed, Master's Candidate - Colorado State University; Dr. Mireille Gonzalez, Co-Director - Center for Human-Carnivore Coexistence

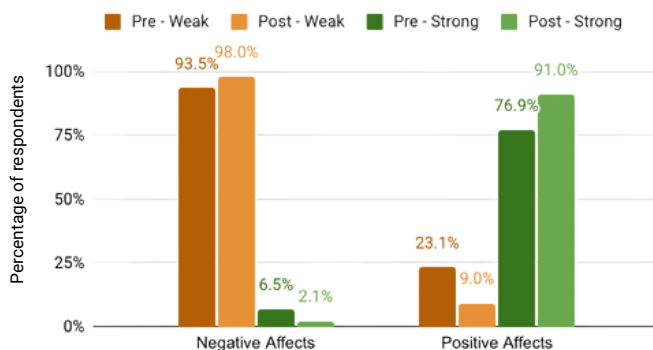
In 2024, Colorado lawmakers passed a bill allowing Colorado Parks and Wildlife to restore wolverines. Defenders of Wildlife, Colorado State University Extension, and the CSU Center for Human-Carnivore Coexistence launched a statewide outreach campaign to inform Coloradans about wolverine reintroduction. From May to September 2025 we held 16 events, reaching 135 people. Our objective was to deliver balanced, factual information about wolverine ecology and reintroduction. To evaluate effectiveness, we administered pre- and post-event surveys to track changes in participant knowledge, support for reintroduction, and perceptions of wolverines (n = 99 collected).

Increase in support, attitude, and personal importance among participants



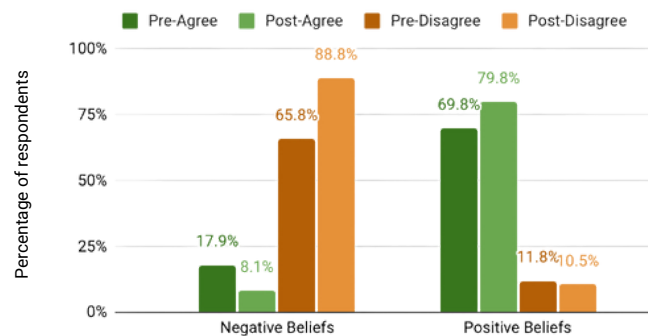
Our campaign was effective in strengthening positive attitudes and reinforcing support for wolverine restoration. Notably, the proportion of participants who viewed wolverine restoration as personally important also increased. When conservation issues feel personally meaningful, people are more inclined to stay informed, engaged, and act in environmentally friendly ways.

Enhancement of positive affect toward wolverine reintroduction



The events also strengthened positive emotions toward wolverine reintroduction while reducing negative ones; pride, inspiration, excitement, and hope increased the most, while confusion declined most sharply. Emotional connection is critical to sustaining long-term public support for conservation efforts, and future outreach should continue to integrate storytelling and meaning-making components that evoke these constructive emotions.

Increase in beliefs about potential positive outcomes of reintroduction



Belief patterns showed noticeable changes. Misconceptions about risks to people, pets, and livestock declined substantially, with nearly all participants viewing wolverines as unlikely to harm people or domestic animals after the events. At the same time, positive beliefs increased: a majority believed reintroduction could boost tourism, and 94% believed the effort would result in a recovered wolverine population in Colorado.

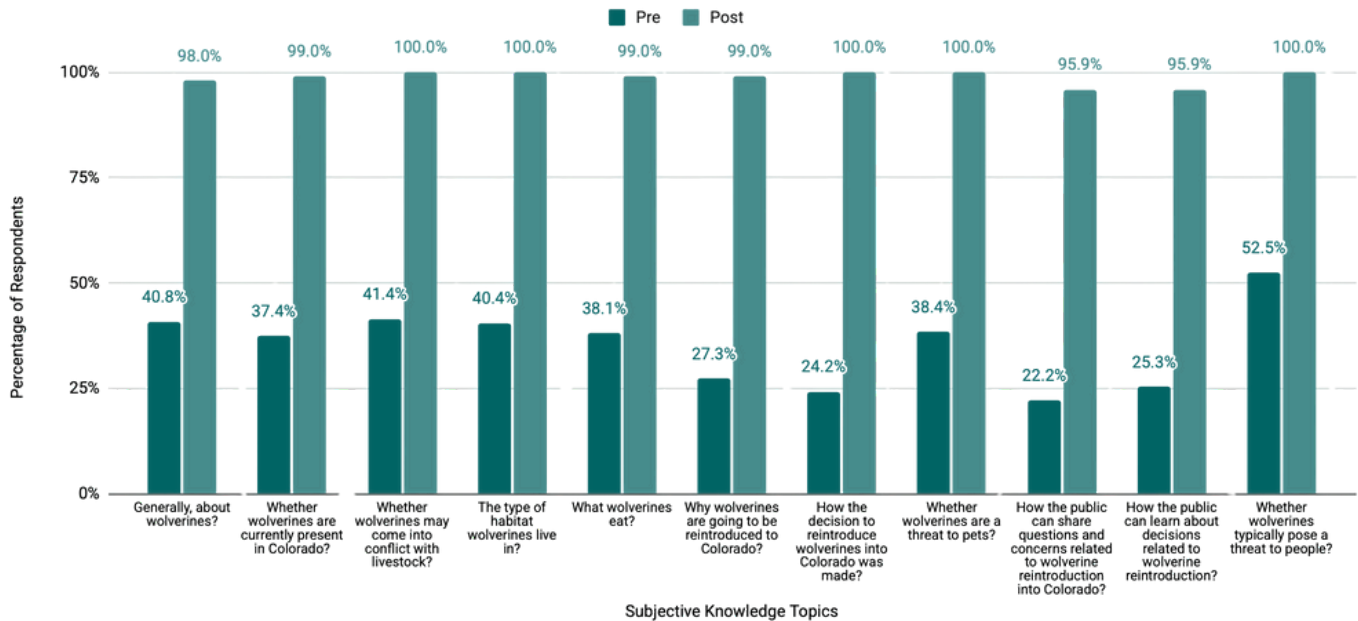
Knowledge gains were among the strongest outcomes of the program

Participants reported feeling more knowledgeable (subjective knowledge) across wolverine reintroduction topics, as well as having improvements in correctly answering true/false questions (objective knowledge).

Subjective Knowledge Rose
35% → 99%

Objective Knowledge Rose
59% → 95%

Percent of participants that reported feeling moderately-extremely knowledgeable.



Next Steps & Future Directions

Further outreach, particularly around decision-making processes and avenues for public participation, is suggested to maintain trust, address residual confusion, and generate more enthusiasm.

Top 3 knowledge gaps to address

- Governmental decision-making processes
- State-specific context about wolverines
- How wolverines affect their ecosystem

Top 3 ways people want to stay engaged

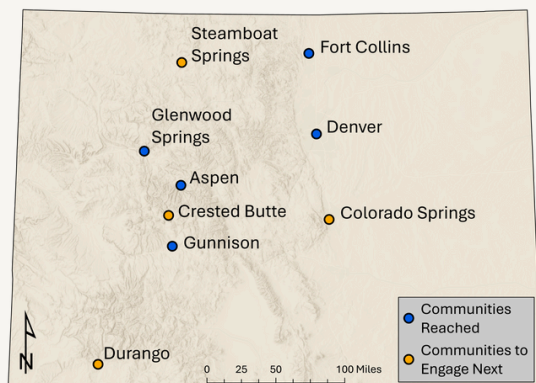
- Discuss wolverines with others (95% post-event)
- Attend a CPW meeting (94% post-event)
- Contact decision makers (69% post-event)

Top 3 ways people want to stay informed

- Email (63%)
- Presentation (13%)
- Social Media (11%)

Event Locations: Reached & Recommended

Blue points represent cities where we hosted events and orange points represent areas primed for outreach.



Map prepared by Defenders of Wildlife December 2025
Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Sources: Esri, U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Ocean Service (NOS), National Geographic Society (NGS), Esri, USGS



THE CENTER FOR
HUMAN-CARNIVORE COEXISTENCE

To read the full report, please visit:
www.defenders.org/publications/2025-wolverine-outreach-research-report