



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Credit: © Dana Romanoff | Tandem

One of the nation's most-visited parks, Rocky Mountain National Park has been, and continues to be, adversely affected by air pollution due to a boom in oil and gas

production in neighboring Weld County. Rocky Mountain National Park covers 415 square miles atop the Continental Divide in the Front Range mountains of Colorado. The park consists of a varied terrain of extremes, from wooded forests to mountain tundra, and has some of the highest altitudes of national parks in the nation, with Longs Peak rising up to 14,259 feet.

All this is within easy driving distance of the millions of residents of the Denver metropolitan area and Front Range communities. Rocky Mountain National Park is also integrally connected to the surrounding landscape and gateway communities along both its east and west entrances.

With over 4.5 million visitors every year, Rocky Mountain is one of the most visited parks within the National Park System. The majority of visitors pass through one of the two major gateways to the park: either Estes Park from the east or Grand Lake from the west. Recent statistics show that visitors to the park spend about \$306 million annually in gateway regions, supporting over 4,300 jobs and creating a total economic output of

\$464 million for the region.<sup>1</sup>

Air pollution from drilling activities threaten the clean air and healthy ecosystems that draw visitors to the region. The BLM has offered leases near the park's western entrance. And just east of the park is Weld County, home to a dramatic boom in oil and gas production. This development has caused the park to fall out of compliance with the standards set under the Clean Air Act.

Analysis from the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency shows Colorado's already severely compromised air quality is worsening. The same sources of pollution harming health, wildlife and landscapes are also driving climate change, a grave threat in the arid west transforming ecosystems in sensitive alpine zones, including Rocky Mountain National Park. Climate change is facilitating the spread of invasive grasses in the park as well as pine bark beetles, which are killing millions of trees. These changes, combined with a hotter, drier climate, are in turn driving a significant increase in wildfires in the parks.

## RESOURCES THREATENED

AIR QUALITY

CLIMATE

WILDLIFE

PUBLIC HEALTH

OUTDOOR RECREATION  
ECONOMY

## BY THE NUMBERS

# 3.4

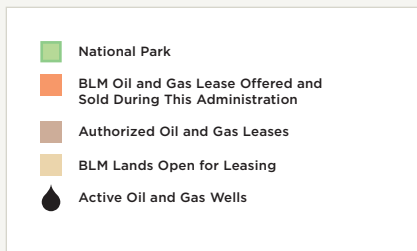
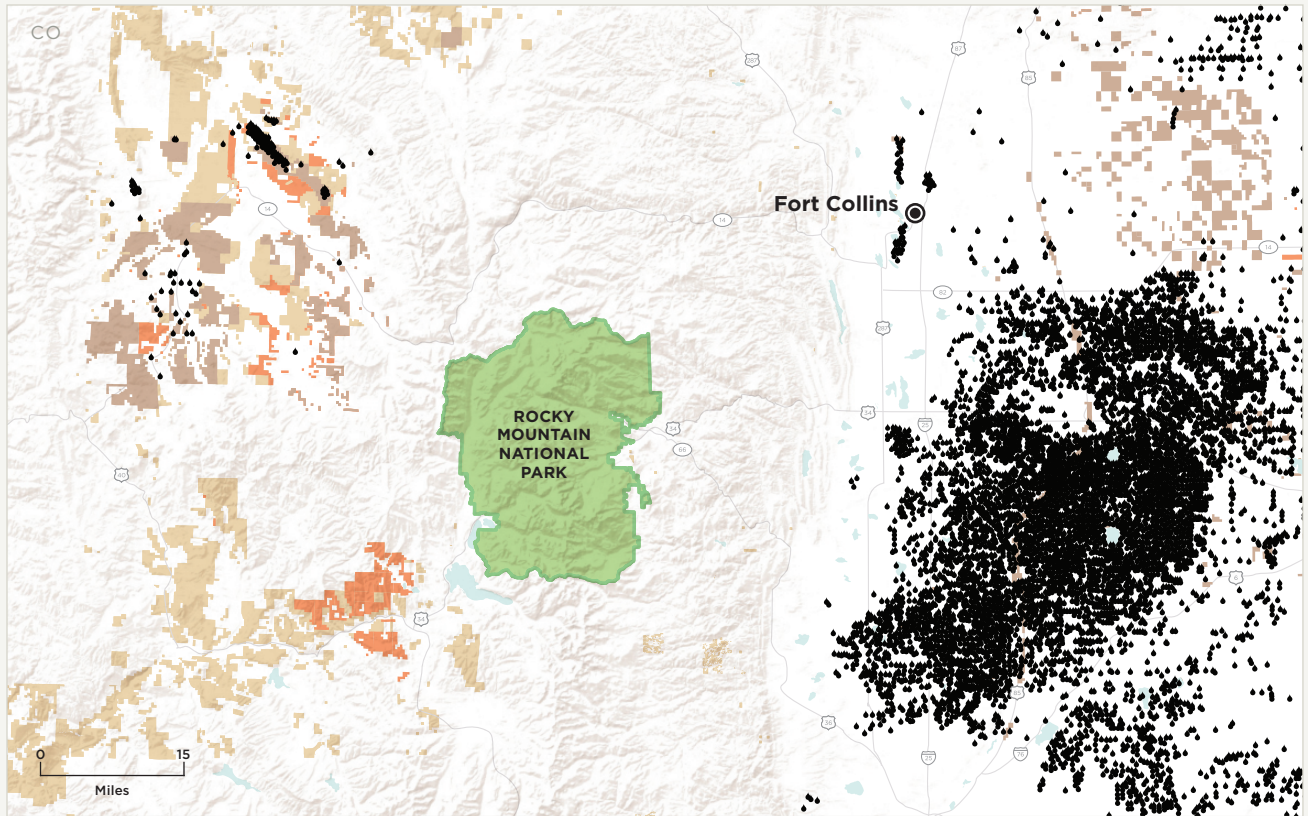
Average annual temperature increase in degrees °F over the last century in the high-elevation park from climate change<sup>2</sup>

# 27,499

Acres offered for lease by the BLM that were challenged in 2018

# 4,590,493

Visitors to the park in 2018, a 42% increase over 2012, generating \$464 million in economic output



<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, "Visitor Spending Effects — Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending," 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>

<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/romo/learn/nature/climatechange.htm>