This Resolution was re-certified with Commissioner O'Hearon's signature on 10/20/2026

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-25

A RESOLUTION AFFIRMING AND DEFENDING THE RIGHT TO HUNT, FISH, AND HARVEST WILDLIFE; AND SUPPORTING ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Rio Blanco County, Colorado ("Board"), is committed to protecting the rights, customs, culture, and economic well-being of the residents of Rio Blanco County; and

WHEREAS, the Rio Blanco County Land and Natural Resource Plan and Policies ("LNRPP") recognizes that hunting and fishing have always been part of the County's history and that deer and elk herds attract hunters from many states (LNRPP Section 4.1, page 11); and

WHEREAS, the LNRPP further recognizes that maintaining traditional historical land uses, including recreation such as hunting and fishing, is crucial to sustaining the Rio Blanco County community (LNRPP Section 4.1, page 12); and

WHEREAS, hunting big game, waterfowl, small mammals, and game birds, together with fishing, has long been a way of life in Rio Blanco County, and hunting and fishing remain significant economic drivers for the County (LNRPP Section 4.15.1, page 95); and

WHEREAS, Rio Blanco County contains abundant wildlife and productive fisheries, and regulated hunting, fishing, and trapping provide recreation, food, wildlife-population management, conservation funding, and economic activity; and

WHEREAS, approximately seventy-three percent of Rio Blanco County is federally owned, making continued access to public lands particularly important to County residents, visitors, businesses, and wildlife-management programs (LNRPP Sections 4.12.1 and 4.15.2, pages 77 and 95); and

WHEREAS, the LNRPP states that hunters and outdoorsmen rely on access to hunt areas and that access for hunting has been curtailed by road and trail closures (LNRPP Section 4.12.1, page 77); and

WHEREAS, the LNRPP declares that the historic right to access federal lands for hunting, recreation, ranching, farming, logging, mineral development, emergency services, and other historic uses is critical to the economic viability of Rio Blanco County (LNRPP Policy 4.12.3(3), pages 80-81); and

WHEREAS, the LNRPP directs the County to encourage multiple use, recognizes access to resources on federal lands as part of the County's custom and culture, and supports accurate identification of public and private access (LNRPP Policies 4.1(8)-(9) and 4.12.3(7), pages 12 and 81); and

WHEREAS, wildlife in Colorado is held and managed by the State through Colorado Parks and Wildlife, while federal land-management decisions can materially affect habitat and public access within Rio Blanco County; and

WHEREAS, decisions affecting public-land access and traditional uses should be based on credible science and made with early, meaningful consultation and coordination with Rio Blanco County, consistent with applicable law and the LNRPP; and

WHEREAS, this Resolution does not support trespass, diminish private-property rights, displace lawful wildlife-management restrictions, or conflict with state or federal law.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Rio Blanco County Board of County Commissioners does hereby resolve as follows:

Section 1. Affirmation. The Board affirms and defends the right of citizens to lawfully hunt, fish, trap, and harvest wildlife. These activities are valued parts of Rio Blanco County's history, custom, culture, economy, and way of life.

Section 2. Wildlife Management. The Board supports regulated hunting, fishing, and trapping as essential tools for science-based wildlife management, habitat stewardship, sustainable wildlife populations, and the reduction of wildlife conflicts, under the lawful authority of the State of Colorado.

Section 3. Public Lands Access. The Board supports continued and, where appropriate, expanded access to federal and state public lands in Rio Blanco County for lawful hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife viewing, and other compatible recreational and multiple uses. The Board:

- opposes closures, restrictions, or land-use designations that unnecessarily limit lawful access or traditional uses;
- supports motorized and non-motorized access through a travel network adequate for public use, wildlife management, emergency response, and resource management;
- supports accurate maps and public information distinguishing public access, private property, and valid rights-of-way; and
- supports reasonable, science-based seasonal restrictions when necessary to protect wildlife, habitat, public safety, or private-property rights.

Section 4. Multiple Use. The Board supports management of federal and state lands under applicable multiple-use principles and opposes actions that unnecessarily exclude hunting, fishing, trapping, recreation, grazing, energy and mineral development, forestry, or other lawful and compatible uses important to Rio Blanco County.

Section 5. Coordination. The Board calls upon federal and state agencies to consult and coordinate with Rio Blanco County at the earliest practical stage before adopting plans, rules, closures, route designations, land withdrawals, or other actions that may affect wildlife management, hunting and fishing, or public access within the County. Agencies should meaningfully consider the LNRPP and disclose and address inconsistencies with County policy as required by applicable law.

Section 6. State Authority and Private Property. Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed to supersede the lawful authority of the State of Colorado or Colorado Parks and Wildlife, authorize entry onto private property without permission or other lawful authority, create a right to use any particular road or route, or limit lawful measures necessary to protect public safety, wildlife, habitat, or private-property rights.

Section 7. Advocacy. The Board encourages the Colorado General Assembly, the United States Congress, and responsible agencies to protect lawful hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife harvest, and public-land access; maintain meaningful local-government participation; and resist policies that unnecessarily erode these activities or access.

Section 8. Distribution. The Rio Blanco County Natural Resources Director is directed to transmit this Resolution to appropriate federal and state elected officials, agencies, and land managers whose decisions may affect wildlife management or public-land access in Rio Blanco County.

Section 9. Severability. If any provision of this Resolution is held invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

Section 10. Effective Date. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

DULY MOVED, SECONDED AND PASSED ON A VOTE OF 2 FOR and 0 AGAINST

PASSED AND ADOPTED on the 6th day of October, 2026, in Rio Blanco County, Colorado.

The Board of County Commissioners
of Rio Blanco County, Colorado

Attest:

Shawn Luce, Clerk & Recorder

Callie Scritchfield, Chairman

Jennifer O'Hearon, Commissioner

Doug Overton, Commissioner