



# COLORADO

## Department of Natural Resources

**Primary Department:** Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
**Date Reported:** 1/15/2021  
**Allegation/Issue:** Manager Misconduct, JT Romatzke, Northwest Regional Manager  
**Appointing Authority:** Dan Gibbs, DNR Executive Director  
**Investigator:** Tim Mauck, Deputy Executive Director DNR  
**HR Contact:** Lynne Steketee, COO and Windi Padia, HR Director

*Based on a complaint filed on 1/15/2021, an investigation was initiated to look into allegations of manager misconduct against JT Romatzke, NW Regional Manager, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, including involvement in attempting to direct staff to put out information against the implementation of Proposition 114 and inappropriate use of state funds.*

*On January 25, 2021, Mr. Romatzke was placed on paid administrative leave while an investigation was being conducted. The following is a summary of findings.*

*Filed 2/23/2021 Tim Mauck*

Findings :

### **Core Investigation item 1**

JT Romatzke's involvement in attempting to direct staff in an effort to put out information against the implementation of Proposition 114, including tipping off individuals regarding a deliberative work process.

In this matter, the deliberative work process refers to the creation of potential timelines ("Planning Flow Charts") for reintroductions of wolves that CPW and DNR staff were working on for consideration in its implementation of Proposition 114 - at the request of Governor Polis. (██████\_2020 Planning Flow Chart\_V3.pdf and ██████\_2020 Planning Flow Chart\_V3.pdf)

The Planning Flow Charts were produced by CPW and shared with Executive Director Dan Gibbs on December 7, 2021.

Concern that staff within CPW or DNR, familiar with the Planning Flow Charts, communicated the nature of this deliberative work process arose when the Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC), filed a CORA Request on December 16, 2020 explaining, "AGNC is informed, and believes, that the Department has prepared and submitted plans, reports, proposed strategies or other documents regarding the introduction of gray wolves." (AGNC CORA Requests 12-2020)

Interviews with staff and review of emails did not directly corroborate the complaint of Mr. Romatzke's involvement in, or attempting to direct staff, in an effort to put out information against the implementation of Proposition 114, specific to tipping off individuals regarding a deliberative work process.

However, while the investigation did not uncover specific actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke to directly put out information regarding a deliberative work product about the implementation of Proposition 114, the investigation did identify actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke that could be construed as questionable, assisting efforts of third-party organizations to mobilize opposition to Governor Polis, and sharing communications that reflect poorly on the Governor, CPW and DNR in the following ways:

1. On Wednesday, December 9, 2020, Mr. Romatzke forwarded the Planning Flow Charts to his personal email address. In an interview with Mr. Romatzke on February 10, he indicated this was to be able to work on this item from home - and consistent with what he has done in the past. (Google Vault - Copy of 20201119\_Planning flow chart.pdf)
2. In an email dated January 8, 2020 Mr. Romatzke responds to a question from Dale Coombs about whether Mr. Romatzke (or possibly implied, CPW) are able to make comment for or against wolves with, "...now we have more freedom to speak about the facts, but the politics and scrutiny is still tremendous. We have to be very careful as our leaders here in the State are very much proponents of wolf reintroduction. Let's just say...we all have bosses." (Google Vault - Round Table Meeting.pdf)
3. In an interview with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] relayed a passing conversation with Mr. Romatzke in which he (Mr. Romatzke) mentioned having a conversation regarding wolves with AGNC, and that [REDACTED] got the impression Mr. Romatzke "may have said more than he was supposed to" ([REDACTED] 2021-01-27 at 15:30 - 7:33).
4. During that same interview with [REDACTED], when questioned if he was aware of Mr. Romatzke "attempting to direct staff in an effort to put out information compromising or complicating or against the implementation of Proposition 114...", [REDACTED] explained, "...not directly...everybody kind of knew that he (Mr. Romatzke) was out there in that ballgame." [REDACTED] further elaborated that while Mr. Romatzke wanted to make sure their constituents were informed of all of the issues surrounding wolves, "...in doing so he (Mr. Romatzke) probably went out there farther than he was supposed to do." [REDACTED]



further explained that he was only aware of any specific directions Mr. Romatzke may have given to staff was through a conversation with [REDACTED], who relayed to [REDACTED] of the direction he ([REDACTED]) was given by Mr. Romatzke - consistent with [REDACTED] original complaint. ([REDACTED] 2021-01-27 at 15:30 - 8:00)

5. Mr. Hampton provided a recording of a Google Meets video conference (meet with [REDACTED] audio.mp4) that took place on Tuesday, January 5, between Mr. Romatzke and some of the [REDACTED] unbeknownst to the participants. At 14:17 minutes into the conversation, Mr. Romatzke explains that "...we've got AGNC, the Cattlemen's (Association) all these groups doing CORA requests, putting editorials out, you know the Governor, DNR already suspect JT Romatzke is behind that, which you know, I won't fully deny that I'm not..."
6. On January 13, 2021, the Colorado Farm Bureau (CFB) released an action alert (GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf), based on Governor Polis' conversation with the Parks and Wildlife Commission that day, "his intention to rush wolf introduction, and place wolves on the ground in Colorado ahead of the deadline set by the passage of Prop 114!"
7. Regarding that action alert, Mr. Romatzke took the following actions between 8:18 a.m. - 8:40 a.m. on Thursday, January 14:
  - a. Forwarded it to Bonnie Peterson (AGNC) on Thursday, January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - b. Forwarded it to Bonnie Brown (Colorado Woolgrowers Association) on Thursday January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - c. Forwarded it to Representative Perry Will on Thursday, January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - d. Forwarded it to Christian Reece (Club 20) on Thursday, January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - e. Forwarded it to D&G Horses and Outfitting on Thursday, January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - f. Forwarded it to [REDACTED] on Thursday, January 14 with the instructions to "Get this to rio blanco commissioners" (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)

- g. Forwarded it to Garfield County Deputy County Manager Fred Jarman and Moffat County Natural Resources Director Jeff Comstock on Thursday, January 14 (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - h. At 8:38 a.m. on January 14, Mr. Romatzke responded to a response from Christian Reece (Club 20) regarding the CFB email action alert, inquiring of Ms. Reece, "Can you push all this out on your end?", to which she replied "Yes". (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)
  - i. At 9:39 a.m. on Thursday, January 14, Club 20 sent out an action alert explaining that "Governor Polis has directed the CPW Commission to accelerate the introduction timeline to conclude sometime mid-year next year." The alert stated "Talking points com, in part, from our partners at Colorado Farm Bureau and Colorado Cattleman's (sic) Association" (Google Vault - FW\_Action Alert-Email CPW Commission TODAY!.pdf)
  - j. At 9:43 a.m. on Thursday, January 14, Mr. Romatzke forwarded the Club 20 action alert to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] with the message, "Got this done". When asked about the meaning of this in an interview with Mr. Romatzke on February 10, he replied, "...we are trying to get as many people to watch these commission meetings and be involved...and be a part of this...As I look at this I didn't write her statement for her. I don't think the advocacy piece of that statement represents what I was trying to do. If I could have gotten 10,000 people to pay attention and watch the entirety of the last commission meeting I would have spreaded that whether they were pro, for or against." (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf and Interview 2021-02-10 at 12:02)
8. Mr. Romatzke forwarded fiscal worksheets for Initiative 79 to Luke Wiedel and Fred Jarman on January 14. (Google Vault - Fwd\_Fiscal Note Info Request - Initiative #79 - Reintroduction of Gray Wolves - Fri Apr 26.pdf)

### **Summary of Core Investigation 1**

While the investigation did not uncover specific actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke to directly put out information regarding a deliberative work product about the implementation of Proposition 114, the following actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke could be construed as demonstrating poor judgement as a supervisor, and compromising trust within the organization:

- 1. Forwarding an email to his personal account containing a deliberative work product invites suspicions.

2. The reply to Mr. Coombs imparts opinion and implies a difference, if not criticism, in philosophy between Mr. Romatzke and CPW, DNR and the Governor regarding the reintroduction of wolves.
3. [REDACTED] statement that Mr. Romatzke mentioned collaborating with third party organizations in a manner that was likely inappropriate.
4. Forwarding unsolicited, incendiary third party emails regarding the Governor demonstrates poor judgement at minimum, and indicates a level of inappropriate coordination with third party organizations encouraging and mobilizing opposition to CPW, DNR and Governor Polis, calling into question the Administration's process of reintroducing wolves and generating a level of distrust of CPW, DNR and Governor Polis.
5. Sharing worksheets for a fiscal note and not communicating requests for such information to budget officers and/or superiors and staff within CPW and DNR.
6. Failing to communicate conversations of interest between legislators to DNR's Legislative Liaison and/or superiors and pertinent staff within CPW and DNR per CPW's Administrative Directive A-10, and Director Prenzlows' 2021 Legislative Session Staff Guidance.

## **Core Investigation item 2**

Instructing staff, and potentially using state funds to produce a video montage of Parks and Wildlife Commissioners being angry, argumentative or doing/saying something that might make them look poorly to the public in an effort to embarrass and/or complicate their confirmation by the State Senate.

Interviews with staff and review of emails and One Card expenditures did not directly corroborate the complaint of Mr. Romatzke's involvement in, or attempts to, direct staff to produce a video montage of Parks and Wildlife Commissioners being angry, argumentative or doing/saying something that might make them look poorly to the public in an effort to embarrass and/or complicate their confirmation by the State Senate.

However, while the investigation did not uncover specific actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke to direct staff in this manner, the investigation did identify actions and communications by Mr. Romatzke that could be construed as questionable, compromise trust within the organization, and reflect poorly on the Governor, CPW and DNR in the following ways:

1. Mr. Hampton provided a recording of a Google Meets video conference that took place on Tuesday, January 5, between Mr. Romatzke and some of the [REDACTED], unbeknownst to the participants. At 40:48 in the recording,

Mr Romatzke responds to [REDACTED] comment about putting out clips of PWC Commission: "...this is not dissimilar to my idea about going back to the last 6-8 months of commission meetings and pulling out video compilation of Tutchton and Adams...and pushing that out on Facebook and other medium sites...it blows stuff up. But as Randy clearly pointed out...we'll get our asses kicked. Which is why I've got an outside group doing just that. But don't share that with anybody." (meet with [REDACTED] audio.mp4)

2. Representative Perry Will sent an unsolicited email to Mr. Romatzke regarding his efforts to generate support against the confirmation. (Google Vault - Fwd\_FW\_GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf)

### **Summary of Core Investigation 2**

A regional manager initiating and/or engaging staff in conversations to push out information regarding Parks & Wildlife Commissioners, and communicating to staff not to "share that with anybody" is inappropriate. Rep. Will's email regarding the confirmation of Commission Tutchton raises further concerns of a more in-depth, or ongoing, conversation, and a failure to communicate conversations of interest between legislators to DNR's Legislative Liaison and/or superiors and pertinent staff within CPW and DNR per CPW's Administrative Directive A-10, and Director Prenzlows's 2021 Legislative Session Staff Guidance.

### **Conclusions / Actions Taken**

This investigation did not find direct corroborating evidence to support the allegations within the complaint and the core investigations. However, actions conveyed through emails and interviews are concerning and indicate Mr. Romatzke acted inappropriately, violated CPW Administrative Directive A-10, and otherwise compromised trust between Mr. Romatzke, CPW and DNR - especially amongst his superiors in the following ways:

1. Forwarding unsolicited, incendiary third party emails regarding the Governor to AGNC, Colorado Woolgrowers Association, Representative Perry Will, Club 20, D&G Horses and Outfitting, and Rio Blanco, Garfield and Moffat Counties.
2. Sharing worksheets for a fiscal note without communicating requests for such information to budget officers and/or superiors and staff within CPW and DNR.
3. Failing to communicate conversations of interest between legislators to DNR's Legislative Liaison and/or superiors and pertinent staff within CPW and DNR per CPW's Administrative Directive A-10, and Director Prenzlows's 2021 Legislative Session Staff Guidance.
4. Engaging staff and subordinates in conversations regarding pushing out information regarding Parks and Wildlife Commissioners, and communicating statements to staff suggesting collusion with outside groups against the proposition:

- a. "...Which is why I've got an outside group doing just that. But don't share that with anybody"
  - b. "...we've got AGNC, the Cattlemen's (Association) all these groups doing CORA requests, putting editorials out, you know the Governor, DNR already suspect JT Romatzke is behind that, which you know, I won't fully deny that I'm not..."
5. Communicating with the public in ways that indicates critical philosophical differences between one's self and CPW, DNR and Administration leadership.



Timothy J. Mauck, Deputy Director, DNR  
February 23, 2021

**Attachments:**

1. [REDACTED]\_2020 Planning Flow Chart\_V3.pdf
2. [REDACTED]\_2020 Planning Flow Chart\_V3.pdf
3. AGNC CORA Requests 12-2020
4. Google Vault - Copy of 20201119\_Planning flow chart.pdf
5. Google Vault - Round Table Meeting.pdf
6. [REDACTED] at 15:30 - 7:33 (Recording)
7. [REDACTED] audio.mp4 (Recording)
8. GOVERNOR DECLARES WAR ON WESTERN COLORADO.pdf
9. Google Vault - FW\_Action Alert-Email CPW Commission TODAY!.pdf
10. Google Vault - Fwd\_Fiscal Note Info Request - Initiative #79 - Reintroduction of Gray Wolves - Fri Apr 26.pdf
11. AD-10-Procedure-for-Division-Legislative-Programs.pdf
12. State.co.us Executive Branch Mail - Director's Message\_2021 Legislative Session Staff Guidance.pdf
13. State.co.us Executive Branch Mail - Director's Message\_ Proposition #114 - The Restoration of Gray Wolves
14. HAMPTON Statement of Complaint
15. Facebook Response (Attachment to HAMPTON Statement of Complaint)
16. Text Msg Jan 15 Hampton Complaint (Attachment to HAMPTON Statement of Complaint)