



April 2, 2019

The Honorable Debra A. Haaland  
Chair  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks,  
Forests, and Public Lands  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Don Young  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks,  
Forests, and Public Lands  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and Members of the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands Subcommittee:

On behalf of more than 1 million of our members and supporters, The Wilderness Society (TWS) writes to offer views on H.R. 823, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act and H.R. 1708, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act, being heard today in the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

**H.R. 823, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act – SUPPORT**

The Wilderness Society strongly supports H.R. 823, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act, by Representative Joe Neguse. This legislation is the product of over a decade of detailed examination and adjustment, public input, local collaboration, and consensus building. The bill enjoys broad local support because these areas bring special value to Colorado and the state's vast recreation economy. Colorado's protected special places form the foundation of the state's character, its economic vitality, and identity.

Because of its locally driven and collaborative development process, the CORE Act enjoys strong support from the local leaders and communities most intimately associated with each area included in the bill. From county commissions and town councils to mayors and beyond, local leaders in Summit, Eagle, San Miguel, San Juan, Ouray, Pitkin, and Gunnison Counties, and Breckenridge, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, Crested Butte, Ridgway, Telluride, and Ophir are calling for the swift passage of this legislation.

In recognition of how valuable protected landscapes are to the economic vitality of Colorado, hundreds of local and national businesses and user organizations support this legislation. From Colorado companies to national leaders in outdoor recreation, the landscapes and history associated with this bill have proved a clear draw for the business community. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, roughly \$4.2



billion in salaries and wages, 229,000 jobs and a total of \$28 billion in consumer spending are attributable to outdoor recreation in Colorado.

The CORE Act brings together four previously introduced and thoroughly vetted pieces of legislation:

- *The Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act* (with previous iterations being the Eagle and Summit County Wilderness Preservation Act, and the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act): Refined based on public input gathered over the course of the last decade, this legislation seeks to protect mid-elevation areas critical to recreation and wildlife habitat. In contrast, most areas already protected in Colorado are at high elevation above tree line. This bill now also includes the historic preservation of Camp Hale, the training home of the Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, famed for their specialized mountain fighting in World War II and the role of many of their veterans in starting the modern ski industry in the United States and North America upon their return from the war.
- *The San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act*: The San Juan mountains in Colorado are world renowned for their beauty, recreational opportunities, and unique character within the state. This bill has been previously reported out of both House and Senate committees favorably.
- *The Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act*: The Thompson Divide area has a rich tapestry of stakeholders from ranching to hunting and fishing to camping, backpacking and many other forms of recreation. It is also on the front line of heavy oil and gas development. The local communities have resoundingly called for the protection of the Thompson Divide and truly Colorado character. Ranching, hunting, fishing and other recreation in the Thompson Divide area are responsible for over 300 jobs and \$30 million in annual economic output for local communities. Furthermore, the collaborative efforts associated with this bill have drawn the support of one of the two leaseholders at the heart of this area, Gunnison Energy.
- *The Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act*: This bill is the result of years of study and consultation aimed at protecting the National Recreation Area (NRA), as envisioned by the Curecanti NRA Resource Protection Study Act and subsequent environmental review process that concluded in 2008. A Record of Decision was released in April 2009. This bill and the process behind it has been locally driven, led by Gunnison County and a broad array of supporters including local businesses, the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District, National Parks Conservation Association, and former National Park Service and National Recreation Area officials at the Black Canyon National Park and Curecanti NRA.



This important bill would protect some of Colorado's crown jewels, including special places vital to the state's character and economic vitality, for generations to come. For these reasons, we urge you to support H.R. 823.

**H.R. 1708, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act – SUPPORT**

The Wilderness Society supports H.R. 1708, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act, by Representative Adam Schiff. H.R. 1708 would expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by approximately 191,000 acres to include the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor. This boundary expansion would include critical wildlife corridors between the Santa Monica Mountain range in the West and the San Gabriel Mountains to the East. H.R. 1708 is also important for its potential to enhance recreational opportunity for the communities of the greater Los Angeles region. We urge you to support H.R. 1708.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Drew McConville  
Senior Managing Director of Government Relations  
The Wilderness Society