

March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The Honorable Michael Bennet  
261 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner  
354 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Scott Tipton  
218 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Neguse  
1419 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Re: TRCP Support for the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act**

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Gardner, Representative Tipton, and Representative Neguse:

I am writing to express the support of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP) for the *Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act*. The TRCP is a national conservation organization working to guarantee all Americans quality places to hunt and fish. The TRCP works with our 58 formal partners and represents over 92,000 individual members and supporters nationally. We support the CORE Act because it would safeguard many of the public lands in Colorado that we care about, most importantly, the Thompson Divide outside of Carbondale, CO – for which more than 200,000 acres of public land would be permanently withdrawn from future oil and gas leasing.

By permanently protecting over 400,000 acres of public lands in Colorado, the CORE Act unites four iconic Colorado landscapes into a single bill. Protection for each landscape hosts a wide breadth of constituent support that includes local counties and municipalities, businesses, recreation and sportsmen groups, and other conservationists.

The landscapes protected under the CORE Act have all been previously proposed for protection through the following bills:

- Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act
- The San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act
- Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act
- Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act:

The hunting units that are encompassed within the Thompson Divide are some of the most hunted units in Colorado and drew thousands of hunters to the area in 2018. Hunters are also able to purchase unlimited over-the-counter bull tags that are valid in all of the Thompson Divide game management units. These hunting tags provide readily available hunting opportunities to the average hunter, something that is becoming increasingly uncommon in a crowded world. Safeguarding places like the Thompson Divide will ensure that these opportunities will be there for years to come.

In addition to the outstanding hunting opportunities, fisheries in the Thompson Divide are exceptional. The Divide contains tributaries to the North Fork of the Gunnison River, the Crystal River, the Colorado River and the Roaring Fork River, which is a Gold Medal trout fishery. Without the continued input of the cold, clean water provided by the Thompson Divide backcountry, these fisheries would be degraded and in turn harm area fly shops and guide businesses.

Hunting and angling are exceptional economic drivers to the communities surrounding the Thompson Divide. According to a recent economic analysis, hunting and angling opportunities solely within the Divide support nearly 100 long-term, sustainable jobs and \$8.3 million in economic output for local communities.

The local community has supported permanent protection of the Divide for over a decade. There are appropriate places for energy development and there are inappropriate places. Due to the already vibrant outdoor and agricultural-based economic structure in the communities surrounding the Thompson Divide, the area is simply not suitable for energy development. Language in the CORE Act protects valid existing rights of the current leaseholders in the area and includes an additional option for companies to trade-in their existing leases and be reimbursed for their expenses.

We support the CORE Act and look forward to working with your office and stakeholders to secure passage of this common-sense legislation.

Sincerely,

Nick Payne, Colorado Representative and Leasing Policy Specialist  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership