

Statement of Dan Gibbs
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Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Before
The Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
of
The House Natural Resources Committee
April 2, 2019

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of Governor Polis and the State of Colorado, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act (H.R. 823). We strongly support the CORE Act and hope Congress will move swiftly to enact it. Governor Polis would have liked to be here today with his former colleagues to express his strong support for this legislation. As you know, as a member of Congress, Governor Polis had sponsored the Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness and Camp Hale Legacy Act, which has now been incorporated into the broader CORE Act.

Introduction

This legislation—the product of years of collaboration among elected officials, businesses, community members, and a myriad of other interested and affected stakeholders across Colorado—would protect some of the most beloved public lands in Colorado for their unsurpassed recreation, scenery, wildlife, watersheds, historic, and other unique values.

As the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, I support this bill because it will benefit our wildlife by protecting critical habitat and migration corridors; it will protect the outstanding recreational experiences that bring people from across Colorado—and the world—to these special places; it will help safeguard Colorado’s water resources by protecting key watersheds and all water rights; it strikes the right balance by protecting key public lands from development, while protecting all existing mineral rights and leaving other appropriate lands available for mining, oil, and gas development; and because it complements the values and opportunities associated with our state lands.

As a former county commissioner in Summit County, Colorado, I support this bill because I was intimately involved in the years-long process of developing the provisions in Title I of the bill (Continental Divide), and I know my fellow county commissioners from other affected counties were similarly involved in the development of the provisions in Titles II, III, and IV. This bill is built on the input of mayors, town councilors, hikers, mountain bikers, motorized users, hunters, anglers, veterans, water users and providers, ranchers, skiers, land managers, property owners, business owners, backpackers, farmers, visitors, the military, wildlife managers, members of the delegation, firefighters, organizations, and countless others.

As a kid living in Gunnison, Colorado, the spectacular lands and waters of the Curecanti National Recreation Area were my backyard and my favorite place to fish. I reveled in the

unsurpassed beauty of the aspen forests of Kebler Pass. As an outdoor adventure guide, and board member of the Summit County Chamber of Commerce, I learned to appreciate the economic value of protecting wild places.

As a certified wildland firefighter, board member of the Governors Forest Health Advisory Council, and former chair of both the Summit County Wildfire Council and statewide Wildland Fire and Prescribed Fire Matters Advisory Council, I understand the importance of forest health, fuels, and wildfire management.

The Governor and I are pleased to join county commissions, mayors, and town councils from across the state in support of this legislation, including Eagle, Summit, San Juan, Ouray, San Miguel, Gunnison, and Pitkin Counties, and municipalities like Glenwood Springs, Ridgway, Breckenridge, Carbondale, Crested Butte, Ophir and Telluride, to name just a few. We join literally hundreds of businesses, from outdoor industry leaders like Osprey, Icelantic Skis, North Face, Patagonia, and Vail Resorts, to local small businesses on main streets across the state. We join an array of organizations, including, for example, the Outdoor Industry Association, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Trout Unlimited, the Vet Voice Foundation, Conservation Colorado, and The Wilderness Society. And we join too many Coloradans to count.

Colorado has a long and rich tradition of public lands protection, with nearly twenty Wilderness and other protective bills enacted over the last 54 years. All of these share the characteristics of broad citizen and stakeholder support and cooperation among the State's elected leaders. The CORE Act is part of this proud Colorado tradition.

There is good reason for Colorado's history of working to protect key public lands: Coloradans love their public lands, our outdoor recreational opportunities are world-class, and they support a thriving recreation industry that benefits our entire economy. Outdoor recreation in Colorado generates \$28 billion in consumer spending and creates 229,000 jobs in the State (Outdoor Industry Association, 2017). Seventy-three (73) percent of Coloradans consider themselves outdoor recreation enthusiasts; seventy-three (73) percent say the ability to live near, recreate on, and enjoy public lands like national forests, parks, or trails is a significant reason they live in the West; and ninety (90) percent believe the outdoor recreation economy is important to the future of Colorado (State of the Rockies, 2019). A poll by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as part of our Land and Water Conservation Fund comprehensive outdoor recreation plan found that Wilderness areas or open lands with little to no development and opportunity for solitude were ranked very to extremely important by seventy (70) percent of Coloradans, higher than any other category of outdoor recreation area (CPW, 2013).

The CORE Act is a combination of four previously-introduced and broadly-supported bills: the Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act; the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act; the Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act; and the Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act. Senator Bennet has been working with all the affected communities on these proposals for many years to help bring together all the relevant stakeholders.

Each of these proposals have evolved significantly as a result of thorough research, collaboration, consultation and input. Together, they are a complementary set of proposals, and the broad support each element of the bill enjoys has been unified by the CORE Act, with communities across the state now working together and committed to supporting each other. The CORE Act reflects the State's current needs and desires for the future. It would advance not only Colorado's interests, but the national public interest in these cherished public lands. I thank Senator Bennet and Representative Neguse for their leadership on the CORE Act and their efforts to move it forward for the State of Colorado.

Title I: Continental Divide

The continental divide region of Colorado's central mountains in Summit and eastern Eagle Counties is known for its soaring peaks, world-class outdoor recreation, abundant wildlife, crystal clear water, and alluring history. It is home to the White River National Forest (the most visited national forest in the country); to world-famous resorts like Arapahoe Basin, Breckenridge, Copper Mountain, Keystone, Ski Cooper, and Vail; to Camp Hale, the storied historical site of the 10th Mountain Division; and to iconic mountain towns like my hometown of Breckenridge.

Within two hours of Denver, the I-70 corridor between Denver and Grand Junction in this region has experienced the effects of the rapid growth of local communities and Colorado's Front Range, adding enormous pressure to the public lands of the region. Millions of visitors compete with locals and each other to experience an array of high-quality recreational experiences, from the solitude of Wilderness to the developed recreational opportunities found at the resorts.

Title I of the CORE Act is aimed at providing a range of sustainable recreational opportunities, while protecting wildlife, watersheds, scenery, and historic resources from development. The provisions of Title I have long enjoyed broad support, including by the local county commissions in Summit and Eagle Counties; the towns of Breckenridge, Dillon, Frisco, Minturn, and Vail; more than 150 local Colorado businesses, including Vail Resorts, Arapahoe Basin Ski & Snowboard Area, and Copper Mountain; the Tenth Mountain Division Foundation, Continental Divide Trail Coalition, Colorado Mountain Club, the Summit Fat Tire Society and Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association, Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center; and many other organizations and individuals. None of the proposed designations would close any roads, trails, or areas that are currently available for motorized recreation.

I am proud of the careful work that we put into this Title. The thoughtful collaboration that went into it included careful design of the boundaries and management provisions of the proposed designations, including my work with the Summit County Wildfire Council to ensure appropriate buffers near communities and appropriate forest management flexibility where needed.

Section 102 would create three new Wilderness Areas (in the Tenmile Range, Hoosier Ridge, and Williams Fork Mountains) and additions to the Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak, and Holy Cross Wilderness Areas.

- The proposed Tenmile Wilderness would sit high above the Town of Breckenridge, mostly above tree-line and ranging from rarely-visited mountain terrain to popular summer alpine hiking destinations.
- The proposed Hoosier Ridge Wilderness provides opportunities for quiet recreation and important watershed protection. Just minutes from Breckenridge and even closer to the small community of Blue River, the boundaries of the proposed Wilderness were crafted in consultation with local fire-protection specialists and water providers.
- The additions to the Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas would expand the protections these popular recreation areas and important watersheds offer. Many of the additions improve the administrability of the existing Wilderness boundaries, and all of the new boundaries were carefully tailored to account for non-compatible uses and appropriate buffers from development. The proposed Spraddle Creek addition to the Eagles Nest Wilderness sits in the foreground of the spectacular views of the Gore Range that are enjoyed by the more than 1.6 million visitors to Vail Resort—America’s most visited ski resort—and it is an important source of drinking water for local communities. A portion of the area was logged in the 1980s, raising concerns about the impacts on water quality, recreation, and scenic values. In the decades since, the forest has reemerged, making the historic “imprint of man” increasingly unnoticeable with each passing year. To avoid a repeat of the past and protect the watershed into the future, the community wants to see this area protected as Wilderness. A special provision is included in subsection (e) to address appropriate watershed protection efforts in the case of fires or flood.

Section 103 provides for the eventual establishment of the Williams Fork Mountains Wilderness, protecting critical wildlife habitat—including for the greater sage grouse and important ungulate herds—and opportunities for solitude. The proposed landscape transitions from sagebrush to subalpine forest, adding a critically underrepresented ecotype to the Forest Service’s National Wilderness Preservation System portfolio. Subsection (c) addresses two grazing allotments that have been vacant for more than a decade with no determination by the Forest Service as to whether to renew grazing there. Developed through discussions with local ranchers, these provisions call for the Forest Service to determine whether to authorize grazing in all or part of the allotments prior to the formal establishment of the area as Wilderness. If grazing is reestablished, it would be grandfathered under the standard provisions of the Wilderness Act.

Section 104 would establish the Tenmile Recreation Management Area (RMA) adjacent to the Towns of Breckenridge and Frisco. The RMA would help enhance the world-class outdoor recreation opportunities there, including renowned mountain biking trails, popular hiking and hunting areas, important wildlife habitat, and essential water supplies. While the RMA restricts commercial logging, it provides flexible authority for forest, wildfire, insect, and disease management, consistent with the purposes of the area.

Section 105 would establish the Porcupine Gulch Wildlife Conservation Area (WCA). The area was designed in consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to provide high-level protections for the only alpine wildlife migration corridor over Interstate 70. The I-70 corridor presents a nearly impenetrable east-west barrier to most terrestrial wildlife species in the region. The WCA would protect the southern approach to and crossing of the unique land bridge over the

Eisenhower Tunnel, through which more than 13.4 million cars travelled in 2018. Those protections would connect to a proposed addition to the Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness, separated by a small corridor between the two to accommodate a utility easement and a trail corridor over the Eisenhower Tunnel.

Section 106 would establish the Williams Fork Mountains Wildlife Conservation Area. The WCA includes important greater sage grouse and big game habitat, and it complements the protections of the contiguous Williams Fork Mountains Wilderness Area by providing a zone that contemplates the potential need for significant habitat management. The complex was designed in consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and enjoys the strong support of hunters.

Section 107 would establish Camp Hale as the first-ever National Historic Landscape. This designation speaks to the storied legacy of the Army's 10th Mountain Division in Colorado and around the world. The 10th Mountain Division trained for winter warfare at Camp Hale and led our nation to victory in World War II. Its veterans went on to create the outdoor industry as we know it today. The area not only harbors the nationally-significant history of the 10th Mountain Division (recognized in part by its designation as a National Historic Site), but also a legacy of outdoor recreation advanced by its soldiers and veterans that continue to be popular on the landscape today, including mountaineering, camping, hiking, and off-road vehicle recreation. The designation also would enhance the ongoing work of the National Forest Foundation and many local collaborators to restore the Eagle River as it flows through Camp Hale. Subsections (e) and (f) include important provisions to ensure the Army Corps of Engineers will continue its environmental remediation and cleanup of legacy hazards in the area, in accordance with existing law.

Section 108 would slightly expand the boundary of the White River National Forest to include approximately 120 acres owned by Summit County within the proposed Williams Fork Mountains Wildlife Conservation Area. The boundary adjustment, which is supported by Summit County, would make it possible for the Forest Service to acquire the land for addition to the WCA, should the Forest Service and Summit County ever choose to do so.

Section 109 would adjust the "Potential Wilderness" designation around the Trail River Ranch inholding in Rocky Mountain National Park to ensure continued access to the property. When the potential wilderness area was designated in 2009, the ranch was slated for demolition. However, it has since become a valuable site for Grand Lake to host events with students, seniors, and visitors. The adjustment will allow the continued productive use of the ranch buildings to continue.

Section 110 and 111 were recently signed into law as part of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (Sections 1002 and 1101 of Public Law 116-9), which passed Congress earlier this year.

Section 112 includes standard administrative provisions, including for the continued jurisdiction and responsibility of the State with respect to fish and wildlife in the State, and for the continued use of the airspace by the military.

Title II: San Juan Mountains

Title II of the CORE Act derives from the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act, considered in several sessions of Congress, and favorably reported by this Committee (H.R. 3914; 111th Cong.), as well as the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (S. 341; 113th Cong.).

The San Juan Mountains in southwest Colorado are another world-class recreational hub, home to the Telluride Ski Resort, world class mountain biking, backcountry skiing, mountain climbing, fishing for the iconic Colorado cutthroat trout, and whitewater rafting on clear mountain rivers. Jeepers experience incredible mountain vistas from challenging roads, and the whole region is encircled by the historic Million Dollar Highway, which along with the Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, celebrates the area's rich mining history.

The mountain towns of Telluride, Ridgway, Ouray, and Silverton, among others, depend on tourism and outdoor recreation as their economic drivers, and protected natural landscapes are the key to the region's draw. The mountainous public lands also are the source of these communities' municipal water supplies. Protecting high quality water is a key part of the CORE Act's goals in this area. Further to the west, the Wilderness proposal for McKenna Peak and the mineral withdrawal for Naturita Canyon would provide much-needed protection for mid-elevation wildlife habitat and migration routes, as well as ideal hunting territory.

Similar to the Continental Divide region, the San Juan Mountains are very much a mixed recreational-use area. Hikers, anglers, mountain bikers and OHV riders all enjoy various parts of the landscape. Appropriate management and zoning is essential to preserve high-quality and sustainable recreation experiences. The proposed designations in this section reflect the need for balance with different recreational activities and are fully supported by local governments in the area.

The provisions of Title II have long enjoyed the support of San Miguel, San Juan, and Ouray Counties, as well as the towns of Silverton, Ridgway, Telluride, Mountain Village, and Ophir; more than 100 local businesses, the Telluride Ski Resort, the San Miguel Bike Alliance, the Silverton Single Track Society, Ouray Silver Mines, the Double RL Ranch, and many others.

Section 203 would expand the existing Mt. Sneffels Wilderness and the Lizard Head Wilderness, as well as designate the McKenna Peak Wilderness on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management in western San Miguel County.

- The jaw-dropping scenery of the Mt. Sneffels Wilderness draws hikers and backpackers from around the world, and the additions to it would fully protect its namesake mountain, one of the most notable 14ers in the region. It would also protect the iconic ridgeline of peaks to its west that leave visitors to Telluride in awe, as well as a number of former inholdings that have been acquired by the Forest Service for their outstanding natural values. Since the bill was last approved by this Committee, the proposal now excludes approximately 500 acres from the originally-proposed Whitehouse Addition in Ouray

County to facilitate avalanche control. The bill also excludes approximately 180 acres in San Miguel County to facilitate underground mining from the Ouray County-side by Ouray Silver Mines—the only active hardrock mining operation in the area and a supporter of San Juan Wilderness proposal.

- The additions to the Lizard Head Wilderness would protect the north side of iconic Wilson Peak, west of Telluride (which is reputedly the model for the peak on the Coors beer can).
- The proposed McKenna Peak Wilderness would preserve canyons, gently rolling mesas, and twisting arroyos in a new BLM-managed low-elevation Wilderness area in San Miguel County. The proposal generally follows the boundaries of the existing Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in the County, but cleans up a number of mapping discrepancies identified through consultation with the land managers. The portion of the existing WSA that is located in Dolores County will remain a WSA for future consideration.

Section 204 would designate the Sheep Mountain and Liberty Bell East Special Management Areas.

- The Sheep Mountain Special Management Area (SMA), located between the towns of Ophir and Silverton, hosts the Ice Lakes Basin, a high alpine basin that is one of the most popular hiking destinations in the San Juan Mountains. The SMA would preserve the area's wild character, while allowing an existing heliskiing operation and the Hardrock 100 foot race, one of the country's most prestigious alpine endurance races, to continue. The bill also includes a new provision to allow the Forest Service to allow for mountain biking in the Ophir Valley portion of the SMA.
- The Liberty Bell East SMA also would be managed to preserve its wilderness character, while allowing the continuation of the Hardrock 100 and an existing mountain bike trail.

Section 205 releases a small portion of the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Study Area that Congress neglected to make a determination for when it designated the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness Area in 2009 (Section 2403 of Public Law 111-11). The provision will simplify the management of the affected area of the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area. It also releases small portions of the existing McKenna Peak Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in San Miguel County that are not designated as Wilderness by section 203.

Section 206 includes a number of standard administrative provisions, including for the continued jurisdiction and responsibility of the State with respect to fish and wildlife in the State, and for the continued grazing of livestock. Subsection (g) withdraws certain public lands in Naturita Canyon from mineral development, preserving an important wildlife corridor and recreation area near Norwood, a town that has embraced recreation as a growing part of its economy. The area was originally proposed for Wilderness designation, but the community ultimately settled on a withdrawal for more flexible management. While the area has not seen significant interest in mineral development, there is broad agreement that development inside the canyon would be inappropriate.

Title III: Thompson Divide

The Thompson Divide refers to the broad countryside west of Carbondale and south of Glenwood Springs. It contains extensive aspen forests, rugged hills and mountains, and critically-important watersheds from the Four Mile Park area to McClure Pass in west-central Colorado. It includes parts of 15 separate watersheds, and provides water and land for farming and ranching, superb wildlife and hunting habitat, and a wide-variety of recreational opportunities. The area's cultural, natural, and recreational values have also been threatened by oil and gas development.

The Thompson Divide Coalition was formed a decade ago to secure permanent protection from oil and gas development on Federal lands in the Thompson Divide area, including the Thompson Creek and Four Mile Creek watersheds, as well as portions of the Muddy Basin, Coal Basin, and headwaters of East Divide Creek. The broad-based coalition consists of ranchers, farmers, hunters, anglers, recreationists, water users, land owners, small business owners, conservationists, and local governments. Over the years, the Coalition has continually demonstrated widespread community support for legislation to permanently protect the Thompson Divide from oil and gas development, while also striving to ensure that valid existing rights are protected. Protecting the area from future oil and gas leasing will help safeguard the important cultural, natural, and recreational values.

Title III of the CORE Act would preserve existing uses on these spectacular public lands, including its water supplies for the agricultural and ranching operations in the area, high quality habitat and fisheries that lure sportsman from near and far, the snowmobiling on the Sunlight-Powderhorn Trail, and the great many other recreational opportunities like hiking, camping, skiing, and mountain biking in the Divide.

This title of the CORE Act was initially introduced in Congress by Senator Bennet in 2013, and then again in 2017, as the Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act. Modifications to the original provisions and boundaries have been made over the years to address stakeholder interests. For example, in the 2017 introduction, and at the request of Gunnison County, the legislation was expanded to include additional acreage in Gunnison County, including the Kebler Pass area of the Gunnison National Forest between Paonia and Crested Butte. Following Gunnison County Road 12 west out of Crested Butte through the Gunnison National Forest, and in between the Raggeds and West Elk Wilderness Areas, lies perhaps one of the largest living organisms on the planet: the aspen grove along Kebler Pass.

Colorado has been a major oil and gas producer for many years, including natural gas production on the western slope. Much of the landscape is dotted with wells and compressor stations, and the region to the west of the Thompson Divide is one of the most heavily developed. The Divide itself has seen only limited historic development, and it maintains a more natural character. The provisions of Title III of the CORE Act are meant to keep it that way: to maintain a region critical to agriculture, wildlife, watersheds, and recreation—the way it is today.

Title III would protect critical watersheds for surrounding communities. The North Fork Valley is one of the most productive organic farming regions in the nation, home to the highest concentration of organic farms in the state and supporting the highest altitude vineyard in the

northern hemisphere. In the Roaring Fork Valley, some 35 current ranching operations continue over 100 years of tradition, supporting the area's agricultural economy, its rural and historic character, and providing essential winter habitat for big game, which is rapidly diminishing with explosive growth the area is experiencing. According to a study commissioned by the Thompson Divide Coalition, the hunting, fishing, ranching, and recreation in the Thompson Divide area collectively support nearly 300 jobs and \$30 million in annual economic output for our local communities.

Permanently withdrawing the Thompson Divide to new oil and gas leasing, drilling, and the associated infrastructure that comes with development, including roads and pipelines, would not significantly affect Colorado's oil and gas industry. Local communities have clamored for this protection to ensure the continued vitality of the area's rich agricultural and ranching heritage, as well as its increasingly important recreation economy.

Section 303 includes standard withdrawal language for the public lands in the Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Area. The withdrawal would help to protect what President Theodore Roosevelt described as the "great, wild country" of the Thompson Divide after he spent a month hunting there in the early 1900s. As with other provisions of the CORE Act, the withdrawal would be subject to valid existing rights, which include some remaining oil and gas leases within the Divide. Only two leaseholders still have holdings in the withdrawal area. One of them, Gunnison Energy, worked collaboratively with Senator Bennet, the Thompson Divide Coalition and Gunnison County to make modifications to the bill. Gunnison Energy now supports the revised Thompson Divide language as included in Title III of this bill. Gunnison Energy also deserves credit for its efforts on the methane-capture provisions.

I am aware that the Garfield County Commissioners recently have shifted their longstanding position of support for the permanent withdrawal included in Title III, but my understanding is that they remain interested in the legislation and protecting the Thompson Divide, and they are continuing to work with the sponsors.

Section 304 was included after discussion with the only other leaseholder in the Divide. This section provides willing leaseholders the option to exchange their leases for credits to recoup the value of their investments in those leases. If the leaseholder elects to relinquish its leases in the Divide, subsection (e) would require the company to give up subleases it holds under the Wolf Creek Storage Field that have been a primary concern of citizens in surrounding communities.

Section 305 directs the Secretary to work with the State of Colorado and its institutions of higher education to complete an inventory of methane emissions in the North Fork Valley, which produces significant methane emissions from active, inactive, and abandoned coal mines. Subsection (b) would create a program to put that methane to economic use through leases to generate energy, supporting the local economy and addressing climate change. This provision was added at the request from Gunnison County, Delta County, and natural gas producers to address waste methane gas that is currently vented into the atmosphere from abandoned, inactive and active coal mines. Subsection (c) directs the Secretary to develop a program to facilitate the sale and delivery of methane that is not leased under subsection (b) to

demonstrate the feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and environmental benefits of producing electric power from methane.

As with the CORE Act overall, this Title respects valid existing rights, including existing mineral leases, as declared by section 306.

Title IV: Curecanti National Recreation Area

Beginning in the late 1950s, the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) began acquiring land along a 40-mile stretch of the Gunnison River between the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and the City of Gunnison for the construction of what would become the Wayne Aspinall Unit of the Colorado River Storage Project. Blue Mesa dam was the first of the three dams comprising the Aspinall Unit. Completed in 1965, it created the largest body of water in Colorado, the Blue Mesa Reservoir. Two more dams are downstream (Crystal and Morrow Point), creating an ideal area for various types of outdoor recreation. Recognizing its recreational value, Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall created Curecanti National Recreation Area (NRA) in 1965 by Secretarial Order, and it has operated under a Memorandum of Agreement between the National Park Service (NPS) and BOR ever since. NPS has managed the area's recreational, cultural, historic and scenic resources and BOR has managed the dams, power plants and related infrastructure.

Neither the boundaries of the Curecanti NRA nor the role of NPS have ever been defined by Congress. It is one of only a handful of units of the National Park System that have no formal congressional designation. While Curecanti NRA has functioned relatively well under NPS management, a number of issues remain unresolved, hampering effective and efficient management.

In 1999, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and Gunnison Gorge National Conservation Area Act was signed into law. The Act required NPS to study how best to protect neighboring Curecanti NRA and determine its final boundaries. The Curecanti NRA Resource Protection Study and Environmental Impact Study was released in 2008 and recommended that Congress pass legislation defining the boundaries of the NRA and NPS's management authority. The study included letters of support from adjacent Federal agency partners who would be affected by such legislation and proposed minor transfers of jurisdiction among the Federal agencies in the basin. Local elected officials and numerous stakeholders also supported the report's recommendations.

Representative John Salazar first introduced a bill to establish the Curecanti National Recreation Area during the 111th Congress (H.R. 6493). Since then, there has been more years of consultation with Federal agency managers, local governments, sportsmen, and landowners to craft a bill to address the establishment of Curecanti NRA that has broad support.

Title IV is a common-sense solution to improve management of this important NRA. Gunnison County has helped lead the collaborative effort to develop the proposal, which is supported by a broad range of stakeholders, including the Upper Gunnison Water Conservancy District, a number of local sporting goods businesses, the National Parks Conservation Association, High

Country Conservation Advocates, and a number of retired National Park Service Superintendents of the Black Canyon National Park and Curecanti NRA.

Section 402 would formally establish the boundary of the Curecanti NRA. Subsection (c) would improve management of the area by instituting a number of jurisdictional changes that streamline management and reiterate the Bureau of Reclamation's sole authority to operate the water facilities under Reclamation law. Paragraph (5) would create a mechanism whereby adjacent private landowners within three miles of NRA can request assistance from the NPS for preservation of natural resource values on their land, including cooperative management, grants, easements, or acquisition—all on a voluntary basis if requested by the landowner. Paragraph (9) directs the BOR to uphold its commitment to expand public fishing access in the basin to mitigate for the access that was lost when the Aspinall Unit was created. This provision is crucial to the many sportsmen who help drive a recreation-based economy in the Curecanti area.

Section 403 authorizes adjustments in land ownership and administration to improve management, protection, and public enjoyment of the NRA.

Sections 404 and 405 direct the NPS to prepare a general management plan for the NRA and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a boundary survey and legal description of the NRA, respectively.

Conclusion

I'd like to thank the Subcommittee, as well as Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop, for the opportunity to submit our views on H.R. 823. I also would like to again thank Representative Neguse for his extraordinary leadership on this important legislation working Senator Michael Bennet and other members of the Colorado delegation.

As the members of this Committee well know, it is impossible to make everyone happy with any legislation; that may be especially true when it comes to public lands, as it seems everyone loves every acre in their own way, sometimes in conflict with the interests of the broader public. On behalf of the State of Colorado and the many counties, municipalities, and other supporters of this legislation, I hope this Committee will recognize the care that went into crafting this bill, the broad support it has locally and nationally, and the public interests it will advance. I urge the Committee to report the CORE Act expeditiously for consideration by the full House.