



## Press Resources

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*Little Bookcliffs (Photo Credit: John Fielder)*

## Overview

Colorado is home to some of the most unique and treasured landscapes in the country, and for many residents, these outdoor spaces are what make life here so special.

A recent survey found that over 90% of western Coloradans regularly participated in some sort of outdoor recreation activity every year. That same survey found that 71% of western slope voters support keeping the state's current Wilderness Study Areas protected as they are, while 63% of those surveyed said they support designating even more areas across the state as wilderness.

A similar [survey](#) conducted by Colorado College found that most Coloradans (65%) want to see Congress focus on protecting Colorado's public lands for future generations to enjoy, while just 24% of those surveyed said they wanted to see them used for the production of oil and gas.

***“Colorado is known for its treasured landscapes and abundance of natural resources. Protecting our public lands is not only essential to our state’s overall economy, it’s essential to preserving our renowned way of life.”***

*– Rep. Diana DeGette*

Colorado's public lands provide more than just a unique place to visit, they are a major economic driver for our state's economy.

According to the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade, Colorado's outdoor recreation industry generates \$28 billion in consumer spending each year and supports 229,000 jobs throughout the state.

To ensure that Colorado's most treasured landscapes remain protected – and available for generations to enjoy – U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) introduced legislation known as the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2019.

**If approved, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2019 would permanently protect more than 600,000 acres of wilderness in 32 distinct areas across Colorado.**

By designating these 32 areas as federally-protected wilderness, DeGette's legislation will give them the highest-level of permanent protection available.

While more than two-thirds of the areas to be protected under DeGette's bill are already being treated as wilderness, DeGette's legislation will officially designate them as such – ensuring they remain untouched for many years to come.

While Colorado already has more than 3,500,000 acres of land designated as wilderness, most of this land is at higher elevations and includes many of the alpine landscapes for which Colorado is so famous for.

Unlike the high-altitude landscapes that are already protected, the 32 areas that would be designated as wilderness under DeGette's bill are mostly mid-elevation ecosystems that provide valuable habitats to a variety of plants and wildlife.

## **What does "wilderness" mean?**

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as "untrammeled by man" and "retaining its primeval character."

***"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."***

*– President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1964*

Once an area is designated as wilderness it becomes federally-protected for people to use and enjoy in a manner that leaves them untouched for future generations to also enjoy.

Wilderness designations generally prohibit commercial activities, motorized access and other human infrastructure, with some exceptions.

Instead, these areas are preserved for adventurers, such as hikers, equestrians, rafters, kayakers, hunters, anglers, mountaineers and climbers to enjoy.

## **Which areas will be protected?**

From the dramatic ridgeline vistas of Grand Hogback, to the sprawling plateaus at Little Book Cliffs, to the stunning red cliffs of the Dolores River Canyon and the winding riverways of the Browns Canyon, the 32 unique areas that would be permanently protected under DeGette's legislation are some of the most remarkable landscapes that Colorado has to offer.

In deciding which areas to protect, DeGette spent years working with residents and stakeholders from across the state – including ranchers, land owners, mountain bikers, rock climbers, off-highway vehicle groups, land management agencies, and local elected officials – to solicit their ideas and get their feedback.

DeGette made numerous trips to visit many of the areas now included in her bill to get a firsthand look at some of the magical places that would be protected.

She's held public meetings with communities across the state to discuss her proposal and get their feedback. She's met with those who would be directly impacted by the proposal to get their thoughts and address any concerns they may have.

The ideas, suggestions and feedback that DeGette has received over the years has been used to draft and redraft the legislation she introduced earlier this year.

### **As Colorado's population grows, so too does the need to protect its public lands...**

As Colorado's population continues to grow, so too does the need to protect more of its public lands for future generations to enjoy.

From 2010 to 2018, Colorado's population increased by nearly 700,000 people and the state is now home to more than 5.7 million residents.

And, according to Colorado College's 2019 State of the Rockies survey, as many as 90 percent of Colorado's residents believe that protecting our outdoor recreation economy is important to the future of our state.

### **The Colorado Wilderness Act started as the Citizen's Wilderness Plan...**

The Colorado Wilderness Act began as the Citizen's Wilderness Plan and was initially developed by a group of concerned citizens who inventoried lands across the state and identified several pristine environments that could meet the criteria for a wilderness designation, if Congress was willing to act.

After gathering input on their plan from others across the state, this group of citizens presented their proposal to U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette in 1999.

DeGette, a fourth-generation Coloradan who understands the need to preserve and protect more of our public lands, immediately started working with the group to turn their proposal into legislation that could be introduced in Congress.

On February 24, 1999, with the group's backing, DeGette introduced the first version of the Colorado Wilderness Act in the U.S. House of Representatives.

### **A historic moment...**

Despite being introduced in every Congress since 1999, the Colorado Wilderness Act had never been called up consideration until now.

On July 10, 2019 the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources held a hearing to consider the legislation. It was the first time that the Colorado Wilderness Act had been formally considered by any committee in Congress.

On November 20, 2019, four months after that hearing, the House Committee on Natural Resources voted to approve the legislation by a vote of 21 – 13.

Now, that it has been approved by the Natural Resources committee, the Colorado Wilderness Act will soon head to the full House for a vote.

If approved by the full House, it will be sent to the Senate for a vote of final approval there before heading to the president for his signature.



*Hikers a Little Bookcliffs Proposed Wilderness (left); Snaggletooth Proposed Wilderness (right)*

## The Benefits of Wilderness Areas

### **Backcountry Recreation Opportunities**

- Wilderness areas give people an opportunity to enjoy a diverse range of untouched landscapes that are free of any motorized vehicles or commercial development.
- Wilderness are ideal areas for hikers, equestrians, rafters, kayakers, hunters, anglers, mountaineers and climbers to enjoy.

### **Economic Benefits**

- Wilderness areas pay dividends for nearby local communities.
- Wilderness areas often help boost nearby property values.
- The outdoor recreation opportunities that wilderness areas provide help attract new businesses to, and increase tourism-related activity, in the nearby communities.
- Colorado's outdoor recreation industry generates \$28 billion in consumer spending each year, and supports 229,000 jobs that pay \$9.7 billion in salaries and wages.

### **Biological Diversity**

- Untouched wilderness areas provide refuge to numerous rare and endangered species.
- Several endangered species – such as the canyon tree frog, kit fox, kachina daisy and sage grouse – depend on the areas included in DeGette's bill for their survival.
- Wilderness areas provide critical winter range for big game herds of elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep.

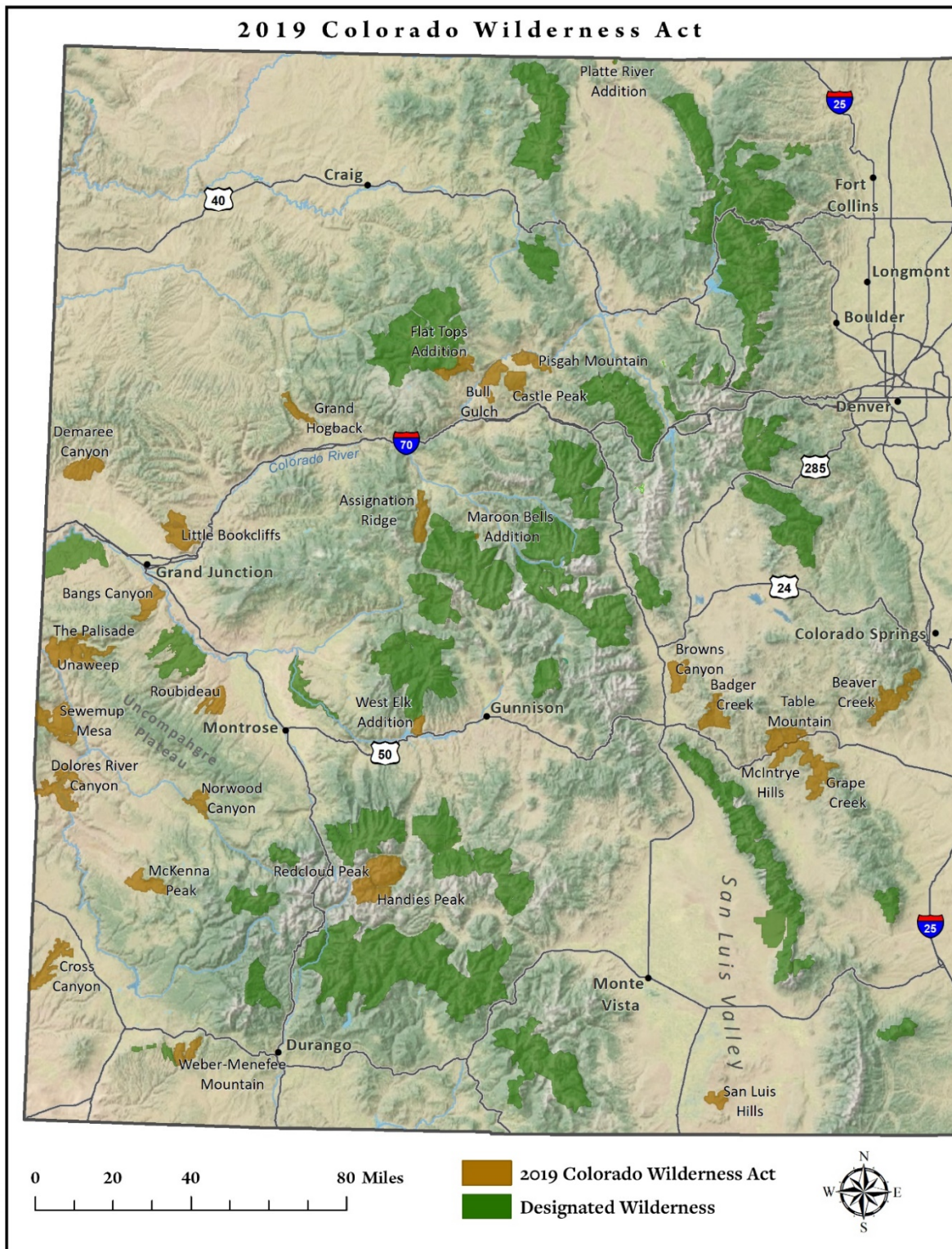
### **Clean Water**

- Wilderness areas prohibit many of the damaging activities that often remove vegetation, erode topsoil and leach minerals into our streams.
- By protecting watersheds, wilderness areas can help maintain the quality of our drinking water; and help clean our rivers and waterways.



## Map of Areas to be Protected

The areas in green on the map below are areas that are already protected as wilderness area. The areas in orange are the areas that DeGette's legislation would protect.



## Proposed Protection Areas

The Colorado Wilderness Act of 2019 encompasses **606,826 acres** of public land managed primarily by the Bureau of Land Management. The specific proposed protection areas include:

### **Assignment Ridge – 19,240 acres**

Assignment Ridge is home to a diverse wildlife population including elk, bear, mountain lion, wild turkey and others, as well as providing much of the regions domestic and agricultural supply. The area is lush with cottonwood, ponderosa pine, scrub oak, pinyon-juniper, Douglas fir, and aspen, all of which wildlife call home. It is a popular spot for recreational activities including hiking, ice and rock climbing, and skiing.

### **Badger Creek – 23,116 acres**

Badger Creek is perhaps most notable because of the lack of human impact. The people who do make it to Badger Creek find a pristine habitat for bighorn sheep, black bears, mountain lions, and a litany of other species that live in the shadows of the Sangre de Cristo range. The area also serves as winter forage and winter range for the bald eagle. In addition, as one of very few spring-fed waterways in Colorado, Badger Creek provides consistent moisture to the ecosystem and supports a healthy population of trout and a happy population of fishermen.



***Badger Creek (Photo Credit: Kate Spinelli)***

### **North Bangs Canyon (13,351 acres) & South Bangs Canyon (5,144 acres)**

High desert plateaus and canyons form the landscape of these two proposed areas. It is increasingly hard to find impressive wild recreation areas in such close proximity to an urban center, but Bangs Canyon remains one of those treasures just outside of Grand Junction. The area offers views of red rock mesas and, at the right time, blooming cacti. Among the species of cacti is the Uinta basin hookless cactus, which is endemic to the area and receives protection



under the Endangered Species Act. The land also supports bighorn sheep and its waters support rainbow trout.

### **Beaver Creek – 35,251 acres**

Beaver Creek, positioned within the Pikes Peak Massif area, is nestled among a number of wilderness areas and state parks. The biodiversity of the area ranges from junipers at lower levels to Douglas fir, aspen, and ponderosa at higher elevations. The creek runs year-round and provides recreation opportunities to residents of nearby Colorado Springs and surrounding communities. A characteristic feature is the two canyons of the East and West Beaver Creeks, which come together at the edge of the area.

### **Browns Canyon – 17,922 acres**

Browns Canyon, in addition to being a popular location for recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, and rafting, is also important for paleo-climatological research. Due to changes in the climate and other events, a variety of endemic plant life such as, Brandegee's buckwheat, Fendler's Townsend-daisy, Fendler's cloak-fern, Livermore fiddle-leaf, and Front Range alumroot. Additionally, the area is rich with animal species of all varieties including raptors like peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, and golden eagles, as well as mammals such as mountain lions, bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, bobcat, red and gray fox, black bear coyote, and several others. There is also a multitude of birds, insects, reptiles, and amphibians, making Browns Canyon a hotspot of biodiversity.

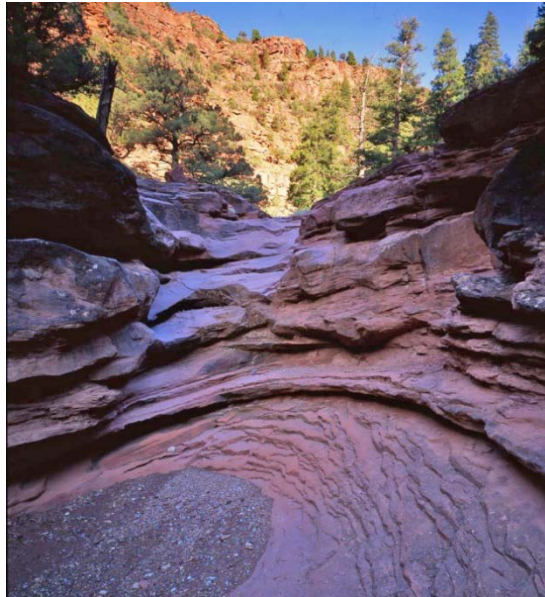


*Browns Canyon (Photo Credit: Bob Wick)*

### **Bull Gulch – 19,839 acres**

The landscape of Bull Gulch demonstrates the Colorado River's beautiful transition from alpine forests to desert canyons. While the Colorado River never crosses into the area, it provides the defining boundary. Sandstone formations dominate the scenic horizon of an area known for populations of sage grouse, elk, and mountain lion. The area also serves birders interested in

bald eagles and prairie falcons. In addition to the natural beauty, the area offers culturally relevant sites such as ancient campgrounds with lithic scatter.



*Bull Gulch (Photo Credit: Jon Fielder)*

#### **Castle Peak – 15,987 acres**

With elevations ranging from 8,400 to more than 11,000 feet, this area features dramatic mountain scenery and a breadth and depth of conservation and recreation potential. Because it receives more precipitation than many areas in Colorado, Castle Peak is able to provide forage for both cattle grazing and healthy populations of elk and deer. The elk and deer in turn provide ample hunting opportunities that are accessible to the Front Range, as this area is just miles from Interstate 70. Recreation is not limited to hunting; trails wind their way through the area for hikers and horseback riders.

#### **Cross Canyon – 24,475 acres**

The contrast of rising mesas and steep canyons outline the scenery in Cross Canyon. The area features pinyon-juniper woodlands and a full slate of birds, including sage and jays. But beyond its natural beauty, Cross Canyon deserves recognition because of its historical and cultural significance. The area was inhabited by the pre-Puebloan people between 450 and 1300 and their presence is well-preserved in Cross Canyon. In fact, the area has the densest collection of cultural artifacts anywhere in America. In some parts, there are over 100 sites per square mile.

#### **Demaree Canyon – 25,624 acres**

The rugged canyons of this area are some of the most intricate and interesting geology of Western Colorado. A combination of sandstone, clay, and shales, create a dazzling area of colors. The arid ecosystem supports mule deer, and predators including mountain lions, bobcat, and coyotes. This secluded area is perfect for people looking to experience solitude in the wilderness.

**Dolores River Canyon – 33,351 acres**

The Dolores River Canyon boasts towering red cliffs that shepherd the Dolores River before its confluence with the Colorado River. At points, the canyon rim rises more than 1,000 feet above the river. Important species, including the endangered peregrine falcon, the golden and bald eagles, and the river otter call the area home. In early summer, several thousand rafters come through Dolores Canyon, and other recreationists include hikers and kayakers.

**Flat Tops Addition – 16,101 acres**

The Flat Tops encompasses a multitude of different types of terrain. From sweeping valleys to sharp peaks, the Flat Tops area is a stunning Colorado emblem that incorporates the best of what Colorado nature has to offer. With over lakes and ponds sprinkled throughout the area, it is a popular destination for fishing. The mountains that comprise Flat Tops today are a result of ancient volcanic activity that has had a lasting impact on the area. The land itself is home to moose, elk, and deer and is an area that is also rich in the diversity of its vegetation.

**Grand Hogback – 10,282 acres**

As the dividing geological feature between Colorado's Plateau and the beginning of the southern Rocky Mountains, the Grand Hogback lives up to its name. The ridge provides the perfect environment for both the adventure-seeker and wildlife, supporting a thriving ski community and flourishing elk population. The Grand Hogback is one of the only geomorphic features of its kind in North America, its continuity and distinctive ridges make it a valued natural phenomenon.

**Grape Creek – 32,884 acres**

Grape Creek is a secluded and serene body of water that flows into the Wet Mountain Valley of southern Colorado. This creek is responsible for nearly all the snowmelt that comes through this valley, creating a lush habitat with diverse vegetation and wildlife. Grape Creek above all is a destination for fisherman. It has few points of access, and can be successfully fished throughout numerous seasons due to the low elevation of the Valley. These factors create a pristine environment that is a haven for both fish and fisherman alike, a true example of sustainable Colorado recreation.

**Handies Peak – 26,734 acres**

With breathtaking vistas and an impressive elevation of 14,048 feet at the summit, the Handies Peak Wilderness area is one of Colorado's crowning gems. As the area boasts of a trademark fourteener, glacial ponds, canyons, and waterfalls its geomorphic individuality is indisputable. Beyond the impressive land features however, the area is also home to a diverse crop of vegetation and wildlife. This wildlife is including but not limited to elk, black bear, deer, and bighorn sheep. Animals are not the only ones who flock to Handies, as adventures come from all over to revel in and enjoy the beauty of this Colorado wonder.



*Handies Peak (Photo Credit: Bob Wick)*

**Little Bookcliffs – 28,279 acres**

As the only Wild Horse Range in Colorado Plateau province, the Little Bookcliffs Range is clearly unique. Beyond just a sanctuary for wild horses, this land is home to an array of wildlife. Animals such as deer, bobcats, mountain lions, elk and bears all inhabit the stunning Colorado Plateau. Characterized by its sweeping vistas that are dotted with numerous types of vegetation but particularly the juniper plant, the Little Book Cliffs Wild Horse Range is a beautiful and functional paradise in northwest Colorado.

**Maroon Bells Addition – 316 acres**

The Maroon Bells are noted to be the most photographed place in all of Colorado. Photographs however, are unable to truly capture the majesty of this geologic wonder. The results of 300 million years of geologic erosion, the Bells are works of art that have inspired adventurers for generations. With 14,000 foot peaks and reflective glacial pools the Maroon Bells are an ideal destination for fisherman, hikers, and anyone who enjoys a beautiful view. The valley hosts a variety of animals such as moose and deer. The area is a stunning landscape that encapsulates Colorado's natural wonder, the staggering peaks, clear water, and fields of wildflowers all drawing people from near and far. This addition on Eagle Mountain will help define the existing wilderness along topographical contours.

**McIntyre Hills – 16,481 acres**

Rugged and underdeveloped natural land is becoming rare in the modern world. The McIntyre Hills area is an exception. It has remained relatively untouched, and consists mostly of semiarid vegetation. The dense nature of the vegetation makes this land an attractive destination for



cross country hikers, horseback riders, and backpackers. The area also is home to a distinct array of wildlife that includes elk, black bear, mountain lion, and wild turkey. Geologically, McIntyre Hills features continuous area of canyons and rolling hills.

#### **McKenna Peak – 21,220 acres**

The McKenna Peak Proposed Wilderness area is a distinctive and stunning feature of Colorado's landscape. The vista boasts a photo-worthy sandstone peak that rises an impressive 2,000 feet directly above the plains. Surrounded by eroded adobe and other sediments localized to the southwestern region, the land itself is a treasure to paleontologists who have found fossils within its soil. It is host to a number of animal species, including elk, antelopes, mountain lion, and the majestic bald eagle. The Proposed Wilderness Area offers sharp changes in elevation from the plains to the peak, enabling all sorts of adventure activities within this diverse and striking area.

#### **Norwood Canyon – 12,102 acres**

With majestic views of the La Sal Utah Mountains, the Norwood Canyon serves as one of Colorado's best rafting sites. The San Miguel River rushes through the canyon, passing through momentous granite passageways and past sandstone towers. The rapids are beloved by adventurers and explorers and home to a variety of aquatic creatures. The area serves as the only western Colorado riparian woodland with water birch as the main component. Norwood canyon is a unique gem distinctive for its "ledge" cliffs and lush landscape.

#### **West Pisgah Mountain (6,828 acres) & East Pisgah Mountain (7,376 acres)**

The rugged, wild terrain known as Pisgah Mountain in Central Colorado is perfect for visitors yearning to explore the areas rich history of gold mining or lush landscape. Once home to the Ute tribe, the mountain now includes two grazing allotments. Despite the grazing facilities, the land remains quite remote with expansive wild mammals and thriving vegetation. The soil is some of the state's most fertile due to the mountain's location in the Central Colorado Volcanic Field. Home to some of the state's most prized scenic views, Pisgah Mountain is emblematic of Colorado in its most natural form with flourishing wildlife, breathtaking views, and a rich plant-life.

#### **Platte River Addition – 31 acres**

This small addition to the existing Platte River Wilderness would preserve the North Gate Canyon. This scenic, rushing whitewater canyon is popular among rafters and fisherman. The area is primarily steep, rocky hillside covered by Douglas fir, pinyon-juniper, and sagebrush.

#### **Redcloud Peak – 38,217 acres**

With an elevation just over 14,000 feet and as one of Colorado's famous fourteeners, Redcloud Peak yields stunning views of red-topped peaks and lush green valleys. The peak, regarded as one of Colorado's quintessential mountain views, connects by saddle to its sister mountain, the Sunshine Peak. The Umcompahgre fritillary butterfly, an endangered species, has been found to only exist on the Redcloud and Uncampahgre peaks in Colorado. The land hides many other

treasures, including aquifers providing locals with drinkable water. Along with many other animals, the peaks are famously home to a thriving population of big-horn sheep.



*Redcloud Peak*

#### **Roubideau – 17,587 acres**

Home to a striking array of animals, the Roubideau lower desert canyon is rich in wildlife. The diverse assortment includes black bears, deer, bobcats, mountain lions, and golden eagles. This ecologically dense region includes rare vistas, riparian areas, and occasional streams. The red and orange rock is covered in expansive foliage, providing visitors with breathtaking views. The land spans from the Sonoran desert to the subalpine forest, enriching the canyon with a massive variety of plant and animal life as well as unique geomorphic structures.

#### **San Luis Hills – 10,527 acres**

The San Luis Hills are rolling hills in the middle of the otherwise flat and arid San Luis Valley. The dry climate limits vegetation, but it is enough to sustain wildlife including deer and antelope as well as a variety of songbirds and raptors. The hills boast breathtaking views that attract hikers, climbers, and horseback riders. Keen eyes often spot the Sage Sparrow, a common patron of the always-blue Colorado Sky.

#### **Sewemup Mesa – 37,637 acres**

With stunning views of the Dolores River cradled by steep sandstone, the Sewemup Mesa is a beloved favorite of hikers. Surrounded by 1,000 foot cliffs on three sides, the mesa is covered in towering Ponderosa pines. The land, home to elk, mountain lions deer, provides much-needed nesting areas for the Golden eagle and endangered Peregrine falcon. In the winter, bald eagles swarm to the cliffs edges to create nests from the Ponderosa pine needles. Sewemup Mesa's majestic views, thriving foliage, and spiky cliffs are deeply valued by nature lovers and explorer.

#### **Table Mountain – 23,559 acres**

Together with McIntyre Hills to the south, Table Mountain comprises one of the steepest Arkansas River canyons. Table Mountain acts as a wildlife corridor along the Arkansas River and to other regions to its north, and it also serves as the home and nesting ground to a variety of raptors, including bald eagles in the winter. There is also a broad array of habitat in the area of Table Mountain including arid shrubland, woodlands, and meadows. This allows a variety of animal life to inhabit the area including the aforementioned raptors, as well as bighorn sheep, mountain lion, coyote, elk, deer, rattlesnake, among others. The area also offers opportunities for recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, and rock climbing.



*Table Mountain (Photo Credit: Kate Spinelli)*

### **The Palisade – 26,624 acres**

Palisade, home to the rare Great Basin Silverspot butterfly, rests in the DeBeque Canyon along the Colorado River. The area offers magnificent views of both mountainous regions and the plains, making this the ideal location for hikers, climbers, and explorers. The region includes both desert and mountainous areas, including Ponderosa and Juniper forests. The valley area is shadowed by commanding red cliffs that tower above, exemplifying the beauty of sedimentary rock.



*The Palisade (Photo Credit: John Fielder)*

**Unaweep – 19,776 acres**

This area encompasses the deepest portions of Unaweep Canyon, with steep granite cliffs contributing to a dramatic elevation drops. Unaweep acreage benefits from a woodland mix of pinyon-juniper and aspens to create scenic vistas. The area is frequented by large wildlife such as black bears and mountain lion as well as deer and elk. Many outdoor enthusiasts value the area for its hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding opportunities.

**Weber-Menefee Mountain – 14,270 acres**

Renowned for its sandstone cliffs and widespread Juniper, Douglas Fir, Ponderosa, and Mountain Mahogany forests, the Weber-Menefee Mountain is a diverse landscape in Southwest Colorado. The land, practically untouched by modern-man, serves as a wildlife haven for deer, big-horn sheep, mountain lion, black bear, and many other woodland creatures. The Mexican Spotted Owl, a rare breed in North American, nests along the rugged hills. The mountain calls all adventurers to experience the scenic vistas, hiking, horseback-riding, exploring.

**West Elk Addition – 6,695 acres**

Located in Gunnison National Forest, the West Elk wilderness isn't frequented by humans, except during the autumn hunting season, when there is an overabundance of elk and deer. Additionally, there are many valleys that contain ponds that are home to beavers and surrounded by trees. Given the secluded nature of the area, hiking and backpacking are another recreational activity popular in the West Elk Wilderness.



## Supporters

Over the years, the Colorado Wilderness Act has received the support of more than 350 businesses and organizations from across the state, including:

- Sierra Club
- Conservation Colorado/ League of Conservation Voters
- Outdoor Industry Association
- Outdoor Alliance
- The Conservation Alliance
- Audubon Society
- Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Environment Colorado
- Wild Connections
- San Juan Citizens Alliance
- Western Colorado Alliance
- Colorado Mountain Club

75% of all businesses that have endorsed the bill this year are located on the Western Slope of Colorado, where the majority of the areas in DeGette's bill are located.

Over the years, DeGette has received more than 14,000 letters of support from residents of Colorado expressing their support for the plan.

The bill has been endorsed by dozens of local elected officials across the state.

In August 2019, DeGette traveled to Cortez, Colorado, where she held a community forum to discuss her bill. As the [Cortez Journal](#) reported after the forum, "a show of hands ... showed about 75% support for DeGette's Wilderness bill."

### **What some of the bill's supporters are saying...**

*"Colorado Mountain Club is pleased to see the re-introduction of the Colorado Wilderness Act which protects a variety of landscapes, from west-slope deserts to San Juan peaks, for natural resources and primitive recreation. The bill codifies some long-standing Wilderness Study areas in remote Northwest Colorado, as well as iconic mountain vistas in the Southwest part of the state." – Julie Mach, Conservation Director, Colorado Mountain Club*

*"Wild Connections board and members are greatly pleased to see Congresswoman Diana DeGette reintroduce the Colorado Wilderness Act (CWA). These are primarily rugged and scenic*

*lower-to-mid-elevation areas and ecosystems that are currently underrepresented in Colorado's wildernesses. All of the areas in the bill are most deserving of Wilderness designation. We are especially pleased that it would offer protection to the remarkable wild values found in six of the bill's proposed wildernesses in Eastern Colorado--Beaver Creek, Grape Creek, McIntyre Hills, Table Mountain, Badger Creek, and the Browns Canyon National Monument. With ever increasing development pressure on Colorado's wild lands, the protections afforded by the CWA become more valuable."* – **John Sztukowski, Conservation Director, Wild Connections**

*"The Colorado Wilderness Act importantly offers protection to some of the wildest regions in Colorado that are also most at risk from the Trump Administration's relentless assault on America's public lands. I've been intensively engaged in advocacy on behalf of these wildlands for over 30 years, and have had the great privilege of visiting a number of these areas with Rep. DeGette."* – **Mark Pearson, Executive Director, San Juan Citizens Alliance (Durango)**

*"Colorado's BLM lands mark a grand transition in the American landscape from the southern Rockies to the Colorado Plateau. Places like Roubideau, Castle Peak, and The Palisade are not only prime examples of high desert and canyon country, but critical wildlife habitat, and the kind of natural places that will only grow more critical over time. But only if we have the foresight and vision to protect them now. As someone who have live surrounded by, found solace in, and worked to defend and support these lands for over two decades, I remain committed to seeing them protected by Congress. I applaud Rep. DeGette for her leadership, and for introducing this legislation today."* – **Pete Kolbenschlager, Mountain West Strategies**

*"An old quote from many years ago alluded to the notion that land is valuable because 'no one is making any more of it.' In short, Colorado needs to take action now in order to preserve the wide open spaces that are such a draw to people wanting to move to Colorado, establish businesses here, and recreate here."* – **Steve Bonowski, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship**

November 19, 2019

Rep. Dianna DeGette  
2111 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Outdoor recreation community support for the Colorado Wilderness Act**

Dear Representative DeGette:

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community and the outdoor industry, Outdoor Alliance, The Conservation Alliance, and the Outdoor Industry Association write to express our appreciation for your work with the outdoor recreation community and to endorse H.R. 2546, the Colorado Wilderness Act.

The Colorado Wilderness Act protects important landscapes in Colorado for their conservation and recreation values. The bill protects Handies Peak and Redcloud Peak, two 14ers with spectacular view of the San Juan Mountains. The Norwood Canyon area includes protections for paddlers on the San Miguel River, as well as the area's unique geology, and the bill provides important protections for paddlers through the Dolores River. The bill supports conservation values and many forms of human powered outdoor recreation to the benefit of the environment and Colorado's quality of life and outdoor recreation economy, which supports 229,000 direct jobs, \$28 billion in annual consumer spending, and \$2 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Importantly, our community supports this bill because of the efforts you have made to ensure that protection of conservation and recreation values move forward in harmony. Because some forms of sustainable outdoor recreation—including mountain biking and bolt-intensive climbing—are not compatible with a Wilderness designation, it is essential that Wilderness bills move forward with careful regard for important existing and prospective recreational values. We greatly appreciate your careful efforts to ensure the bill does not close or impair access for valued areas. We strongly support and appreciate, as well, your inclusion of language to ensure that fixed anchors for climbing are managed appropriately within Wilderness areas. Without these considerations we would not be able to offer our endorsement.

Through the process of vetting the proposed designations, we commend your efforts to consult with the outdoor recreation community, both local and national. We appreciated the opportunity to work with you to share GIS data concerning important recreational features of the landscape and to ground truth those concerns with a wide array of outdoor recreation stakeholders in Colorado and nationally. We believe these steps are essential to building widely-supported proposals that work to the benefit of conservation and recreation, now and into the future, and we hope that outreach to local stakeholders in Colorado will continue as the bill makes its way through Congress.

In general, we strongly prefer that important areas for activities like mountain biking be protected, including for their conservation value, through non-Wilderness designations rather than being left in multiple-use management. In light of the careful attention you have given, however, to avoiding undue impacts to recreation access—as well as the important conservation values and recreation opportunities supported by the proposed designations—we support the bill with the proposed amendments and look forward to seeing it advance. We hope to find opportunities to work with you in the future to develop appropriate recreation and conservation-focused solutions to protect landscapes where Wilderness designation is not a viable approach.

Thank you again for your ongoing efforts to support recreation and conservation values in Colorado.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Policy Director  
Outdoor Alliance

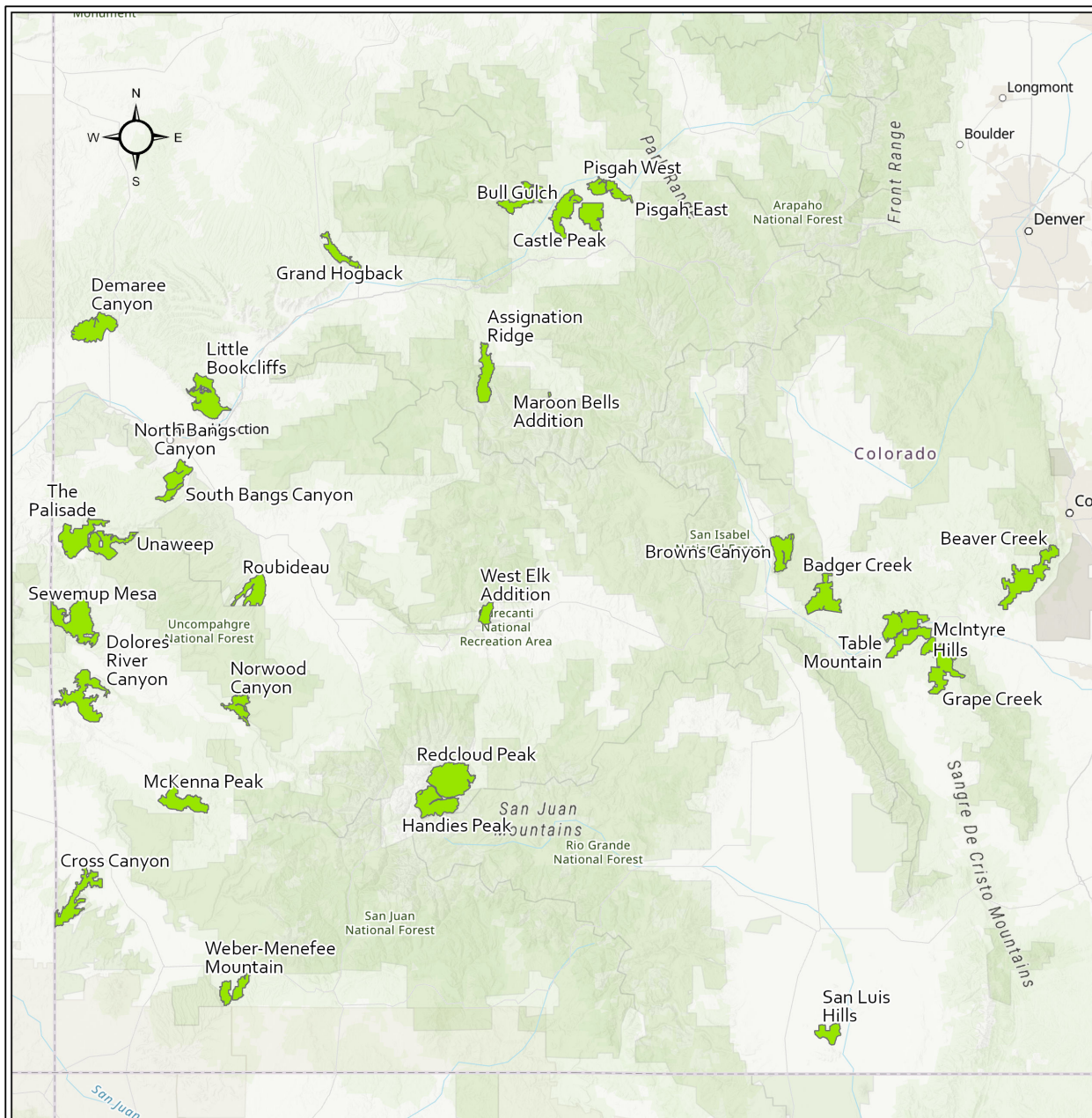


Kirsten Blackburn  
Advocacy Manager  
The Conservation Alliance



Patricia Rojas-Ungar  
Vice President, Government Affairs  
Outdoor Industry Association

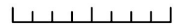


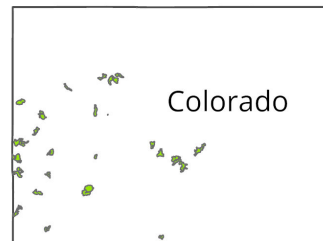


## Colorado Wilderness Act - Overview Map

Colorado Wilderness Act (HR 2546)

 Proposed Wilderness Area

0 10 20 40 Miles  




## **Our Organizations**

### **Outdoor Alliance**

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

### **The Conservation Alliance**

The Conservation Alliance is an organization of like-minded businesses whose collective contributions support grassroots environmental organizations and their efforts to protect wild places where outdoor enthusiasts recreate. Alliance funds have played a key role in protecting rivers, trails, wildlands and climbing areas. Membership in the Alliance is open to all companies who care about protecting our most threatened wild places for habitat and outdoor recreation. Since its inception in 1989, The Conservation Alliance has contributed more than \$21 million, helped to protect more than 51 million acres of wildlands; protect 3,107 miles of rivers; stop or remove 34 dams; designate five marine reserves; and purchase 14 climbing areas. For complete information on The Conservation Alliance, see [www.conservationalliance.com](http://www.conservationalliance.com).

### **Outdoor Industry Association**

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the national trade association for the outdoor industry and is the title sponsor of Outdoor Retailer, the largest outdoor products tradeshow in North America. OIA serves over 1,300 manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers through a focus on international trade and public lands and recreation policy, sustainable business innovation and outdoor participation.

# THE DAILY SENTINEL

Printed Letters: Nov. 19, 2019

## DeGette's wilderness bill deserves support

I am a 40-year member of the Colorado Mountain Club (our local group was founded by Bob Beverly in 1950). The CMC has more than 6,000 members across Colorado.

The U.S. House of Representatives will consider in committee an important bill for protecting recreation on our Western Slope BLM lands, though it will be easy to miss given the impeachment drama. Denver Congresswoman Diana DeGette's Colorado Wilderness Act proposes to protect more than half a million acres of deserving BLM wildlands, including areas here in Mesa County. The bill would permanently protect as wilderness incomparable landscapes in the Dolores River canyon county such as the Palisade and Unaweep Canyon. It would also complement the Bangs Canyon recreation area by protecting the wilderness backcountry but not closing any existing trails or roads. Finally, the legislation would protect the Little Bookcliffs area and its iconic wild horse herd, an area already ringed by oil and gas development.

I'm glad that Rep. DeGette has taken an interest in protecting public lands around the state. Rep. Tipton has done very little to increase conservation on public lands in the past few years, and I hope he will engage in this effort as well as our senators. Unfortunately, we can't count on our local county commissioners to help, since they are publicly calling on Congress to remove interim wilderness protections for some of the same areas that Rep. DeGette is actually seeking to protect.

We know that protected public lands help create the kinds of scenic and recreational opportunities that help in the economic transitions so many Western Slope counties, including ours, are currently navigating. I'd urge Rep. Tipton and our local elected leaders to change their tune and join Rep. DeGette in seeking to protect our BLM wilderness public lands.

BILL HAMANN

*Grand Junction*