



February 23, 2021

Congresswoman Lauren Boebert
Att: Jeff Smalls & Ashley Higgins
1609 Longworth HOB
Washington DC 20515

Re: 2021 Omnibus Wilderness & Amendments

Dear Jeff and Ashley;

Please accept this correspondence as the comments of the above referenced Organizations vigorously opposing the CORE Wilderness Proposal (HR 803) and the Colorado Wilderness Act (HR577) hereinafter referred to as "the Proposal". After a detailed review of the Proposal, the Organizations have concluded that every area expanded or created in the Proposal would result in significant lost recreational opportunities for the overwhelming portion of visitors to the Proposal area, both currently and in the future. While there are significant lost opportunities, there is also no additional protections for multiple use routes that might remain outside the Wilderness areas and no new areas are designated or released for multiple use recreational opportunities.

The Organizations have spent many years trying to hammer out something that works for everyone around these proposals, and have simply been stonewalled at every turn by the sponsors of this legislation in both Houses of Congress. This is despite the fact our groups were thanked by outgoing Senator Mark Udall for our collaboration and efforts around the development of the Hermosa Creek Watershed Management legislation in signed into law on December 19, 2014 as Section 3062 in the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (PL 113-291). This legislation released a WSA and specifically protected motorized usage in the area moving forward, designated a large special management area where multiple uses were protected and designated Wilderness in areas where that management was appropriate. We had hoped this collaboration was a roadmap for resolving many of the ongoing challenges we encounter around Wilderness designation and releases. Unfortunately, we were incorrect as exemplified by the efforts around HR 577 and HR 803 as phone calls are not returned, meetings are continued and ideological trench warfare has returned around these Proposals.

It is worth noting, the Colorado Wilderness Act would heavily impact many recently developed trail networks that have enjoyed strong bi-partisan and community support or historical trail networks that serve a wide range of interests. Examples of these types of losses would include:

1. Bangs Canyon area, which developed an extensive multiple use trail network after a complete NEPA review and analysis and almost a million dollars in direct funding from users for the project. The Bangs Canyon SMA area is now to be designated as Wilderness.
2. Delores Canyon – this area has a large network of trails serving a wide range of interests that has existed for an extended period of time without controversy.

While the list above is far from exhaustive, these are examples of impacts we are seeing all too frequently.

a. Our position on Specific Amendments.

Please note that while we do not specifically address every Amendment, several of these are unrelated to recreational usages and outside our expertise to discuss in a meaningful manner. While we are not opposed to any of the Amendments on the list, we are not taking a position.

1. Rep. Boebert 30x30 Program Nullification Amendment #18

Vigorously support. This Executive Order is a direct conflict with multiple mandates that have managed public lands successfully for decades. Not only does this EO conflict with these mandates, the application of these concepts to private property rights and interests is even more troubling.

2. Rep. Boebert – BLM headquarters – Amendment #16

Vigorously support. Moving BLM national headquarters closer to lands owned and managed by BLM has greatly increased the responsiveness of the BLM to a wide range of issues. This amendment has garnered strong bipartisan support.

3. Rep. Boebert Native Americans, Other Minorities and Women Jobs Protection Act - Amendment #60

No position.

4. Rep. Boebert CO, AZ, CA, WA Wilderness Study Act Amendment #56

Vigorously support. The lingering designations around the Wilderness process create significant management challenges moving forward in areas that have never been suitable for designation as Wilderness. The loss of historical recreational opportunities due to the lingering designation of the West Needles WSA was a major issue driving the Hermosa Creek legislation.

5. Rep Boebert Wilderness Wildfire Amendment #20

Vigorously support. Impacts from catastrophic wildfire must be addressed to avoid further impacts to recreational usages and other interests outside the burn areas. Prohibiting this management by a subsequent Congressional designation of Wilderness simply makes no sense. Even without a Wilderness designation these efforts can be hugely expensive and the goal for these areas must be restoration and stabilization in a cost effective and timely manner.

6. Rep Boebert Wilderness Authorization Amendment #19

Vigorously support. Too often local interests in a Wilderness designation are overwhelmed by large special interests that are not even familiar with the areas being designated. Both CORE and Colorado Wilderness Proposals have extensive opposition from local governments impacted by designations but these concerns are not an issue for special interests based in Denver.

7. Rep Boebert Colorado Wilderness Study area release Amendment #17

Vigorously support. This has been proposed in stand alone legislation and as a possible balancing interest in the CORE proposal as part of Congressman Tipton's REC act. Release of this designation is hugely important to the motorized community. These have proven unsuccessful previously.

8. Rep Boebert Recreation Amendment 14

Vigorously support. It is our experience that clearly stating all actions to be protected in the designation is a critical step and this simply has not been done in the Curecanti NRA portions of the Proposal. There is a long history of diverse high-quality recreational opportunities being provided without controversy in the proposed Curecanti NRA. These high-quality multiple use opportunities have been specifically recognized when Congress passed legislation exploring a possible Congressional designation for the area in 1999. These are recreational opportunities that the Organizations and its members have enjoyed in the area including use of the 10 campgrounds located throughout the proposed NRA some of which are approaching 100 sites in size. When Congress mandated review of the Curecanti area for possible designation as an NRA, Congress specifically recognized that:

“Congress finds that....

(8) land in and adjacent to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison Gorge is—

(A) recognized for offering exceptional multiple use opportunities;”¹

As a result of Public Law 107-76, the NPS undertook an extensive review and analysis of the recreational usage on the Curecanti NRA. This research specifically identified the wide range of important recreational opportunities on the Curecanti as the NPS identified the following breakdown of visitation to the area:²

¹ See, Public Law 107-76 at §2.

² See, National Park Service; *Curecanti National Recreation Area- Visitor Study*- Summer 2010 at pg. 34

Activities on this visit

Question 10a

On this visit, in which activities did you and your personal group participate within Curecanti NRA?

Results

- As shown in Figure 36, the most common activities in which visitor groups participated were:

47% General sightseeing
46% Fishing
38% Motor boating

- "Other" activities (7%) were:

ATVing
Biking
Canoe camping
Dump station
Eat
Exploring
Jeep tour
Junior Ranger program
Learning about Curecanti NRA
Motorcycling
Mountain biking
National Park Passport stamp
Obtain boat permit
Pine Creek Boat Ride
Railroad exhibits
Railroad history
Sailing
Shore camping on our boat
Water sports (skiing, tubing)

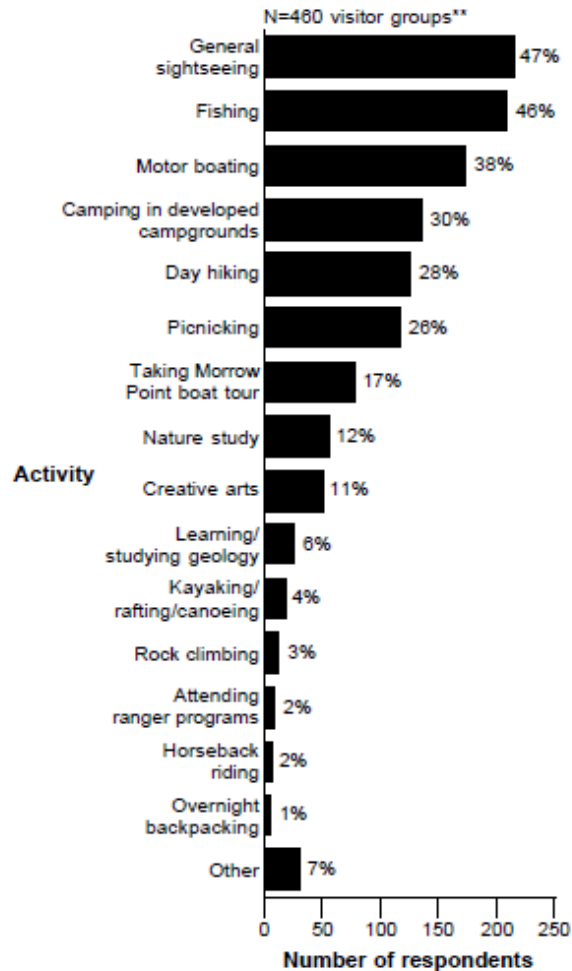


Figure 36. Activities on this visit

Recreation Area in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.”³

The wide range of recreational opportunities and diversity simply is not supported or protected when the characteristics of the Curecanti NRA are hunting, fishing and boating. In a troubling turn of events, hunting, which is identified as the reason less than 5% of visitors are using the Curecanti NRA is identified as a characteristic of the NRA, while other uses such as camping and trails-based usages, which are some of the highest visitations of the area are omitted. This simply lacks any basis in logic or fact and simply must be resolved to ensure that the current usages of the area are reflected as the Curecanti area is an area where all recreational usage exists with

³ See, §402(c)(4) of the CORE act proposal.

minimal conflicts and identified as one of the big wins for multiple use. Our position on that assertion is exactly the opposite.

9. Rep Boebert Water Rights Amendment #13

No position.

10. Rep Boebert Grazing Amendment #15

No position.

11. Rep Boebert grazing Amendment #66

No position.

12. Reps. Stauber and Boebert Amendment #11

Vigorously support for reasoning in issue #6.

13. Reps Stauber and Boebert Amendment #12

Vigorously support for reasoning in issue #6.

14. Reps. Stauber and Boebert Amendment #10

Vigorously Support. Our concerns with Thompson Divide and mineral withdrawal more generally are the standards proposed would require management of the area to reduce emissions generally found in auto exhaust. This could be used to close trails in these area in the future. We would like to see any management restricted to at least point sources for emissions.

15. Reps Fulcher, Boebert and Man water Rights- Amendment #39

No position.

16. Reps Fulcher, Boebert and Man water Rights- Amendment #44

No position.

17. Reps. Westerman and Boebert OHV trail Amendment #48

Vigorously support. This is a major concern for the motorized community as many proposed Wilderness boundaries are only a few feet from adjacent trails outside the Wilderness. This makes it very difficult to impossible to maintain the trail in the long term and also puts the trail at risk of immediate closure as MVUM and forest service mapping often is not accurate enough to be used in this manner.

18. Reps Westerman and Boebert High Risk Fire Amendment #46

Vigorously support for reasoning in #5.

19. Reps Newhouse and Boebert Amendment #54

No position.

20. Reps LaMalfa and Boebert vegetation management

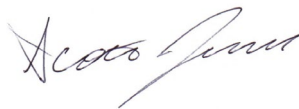
Vigorously support for reasoning on issue #5.

B. Conclusion.

The Organizations welcome this opportunity to comment on the proposal and related amendments. These amendments are a step in the right direction.

Please feel free to contact Scott Jones, Esq. if you should wish to discuss any of the issues that have been raised in these comments further. His contact information is Scott Jones, Esq., 508 Ashford Drive, Longmont Colorado 80504; phone 518-281-5810; email Scott.jones46@yahoo.com

Respectfully Submitted,



Scott Jones, Esq.
COHVCO/TPA Authorized Rep.
CSA President



D.E. Riggle
Director of Operations
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