



ACTION ALERT

THE CORE WILDERNESS PROPOSAL NEEDS YOUR OPPOSITION!

Our Quick Thoughts:

Senator Bennet and Representative Neguse recently proposed the CORE Wilderness Act and it prohibits motorized usage of almost 400,000 acres of public lands. We lose legal trails and riding areas right now and even more long-term expansion opportunities in the future. Many areas proposed to be designated have been previously released for non-wilderness multiple use by Congress. Rather than the strong community support that is being asserted, there is a complete lack of consensus on the CORE Wilderness Act. Our requests on the CORE Wilderness Act component proposals have been very reasonable and have been consistently stonewalled.

The CORE Wilderness Act is simply a combination of two of the usual Wilderness suspects we have been fighting for a decade or more. They are: 1. The old San Juan Wilderness Proposal; 2. The old Continental Divide Wilderness Proposal. CORE also includes the Old Thompson Divide Proposal and a boundary for the Curecanti National Park around Blue Mesa Reservoir. Despite the assertions this is a recreation bill, CORE Wilderness Act does not improve recreation access for most users but rather closes trails, put far more trails at risk in the long term and closes open areas to future usage. **This is a Wilderness bill!!**

We also would like to recognize Senator Gardner and Congressman Tipton Office's for resisting the immense pressure being applied regarding this legislation and recognizing the negative impacts to public access to public lands that would result and continuing to work towards a legislative proposal that protects all forms of recreation and multiple usage of these lands.

Quick Summary of the San Juan Wilderness impacts to motorized recreation:

1. **The San Juan portion of CORE Wilderness closes approximately 55,000 acres to motorized usage** with 32,000 of Wilderness and 23,000 acres of management areas prohibiting motorized usage. No releases or protections for motorized are in the San Juan portion of the CORE Wilderness.

2. **The CORE Wilderness closes the Sheep Mtn area outside Telluride to snowmobile usage,** which is currently legal and has been under the GMUG management plan since 1983.

3. **While the San Juan proposal does not close trails it brings the Wilderness within 50ft of where boundary trails are thought to be.** USFS MVUM are simply not accurate for this type of management and we would lose with any inaccuracy in mapping. More room is needed to perform maintenance and reroutes on the trails to keep them open. We have proposed 300 ft buffer and a Congressional protection (similar to National Scenic or National Motorized Recreation Trail) for these trails for years - they have fallen on deaf ears

4. **We are unable to determine the exact origin of the 50ft buffer standard** but by comparison the US Forest Service recommends a half mile buffer around trails designated under the National Trail System Act. Why is the buffer so much smaller here?

5. **Many of the areas now sought to be designated as Wilderness were specifically released by Congress for Non-Wilderness Multiple Use as part of the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Act.** Many of the current Wilderness boundaries were put in the specific location to avoid conflict with trails in the area, and the San Juan Proposal would put the boundaries in the locations Congress already found unacceptable in 1980.

A quick summary of Continental Divide Wilderness impacts to motorized:

1. **The Continental Divide portion of CORE Wilderness proposes 43,000 acres of Wilderness and 28,000 acres of management areas that prohibit motorized usage, while claiming to balance this with management of 28,000 acres for motorized (which is already open to motorized). Tough to claim that is a benefit to recreation.**

2. **The Continental Divide portion of CORE Wilderness closes extensive legal trail networks** in the Spraddle Creek and Williams Fork areas that were just supported by travel management planning in 2012.

3. **Almost every area proposed to be Wilderness in Continental Divide portion has been identified as a future motorized expansion area.** This is simply unacceptable as only 7% of WRNF was suitable and available for snowmobile usage in the 2012 Forest Travel plan. By comparison almost 30% of the WRNF is already Wilderness and sees approximately 3% of all visitation.

4. **There is no balance in the Continental Divide** as the Ten-mile Recreation area is closed to motorized along with wildlife areas despite the fact that much of these areas have legal motorized access currently.

5. **The Camp Hale provisions allowing motorized access to 28,000 acres we already have legal access to is simply insufficient to balance out approximately 400,000 acres of new Wilderness and closures.**

6. **The “No Name” addition to the Holy Cross Wilderness puts the Holy Cross City trail at risk** due to the proximity of the Wilderness impairing the ability to maintain the trail. This is a nationally recognized route

A more detailed analysis of site-specific impacts is available here:

2018 San Juan Wilderness Proposal Comments

<http://www.coloradotpa.org/2019/02/06/san-juan-wilderness-proposal-2/>

2018 Continental Divide Wilderness Proposal Comments

<http://www.coloradotpa.org/2018/03/18/continental-divide-recreation-wilderness-and-camp-hale-act/>

A draft of our counter proposal protecting public access to recreational opportunities

<http://www.coloradotpa.org/2018/09/12/conceptual-paper-on-continental-divide-wilderness-and-recreation-act-proposal-hr-2554/>

Our asks from you is submitting comments around these issues:

1. There is no consensus around the CORE Wilderness Proposal and previous Congressional decisions made by consensus must be honored. Pursuing consensus efforts that ignore previous consensus decisions is difficult to understand. **A lot of work is needed to protect all forms of recreation in the CORE Wilderness act. Don't close the public out of public lands.**
2. If we are protecting recreation, why are so many opportunities being lost? Legally designated areas should not be closed. Wider buffers for existing legal trails should be combined with Congressional designations protecting motorized usage of the route when Wilderness is immediately adjacent to the trail.
3. Previous legal determinations regarding the utilization of areas for recreation in the future **must be honored** rather than having these areas designated as Wilderness.
4. **Outstanding commitments made in previous Wilderness bills such as Rollins Pass Road that Congress mandated be reopened in 2002 must be honored.** There are also areas we would like to see released and protected for multiple use, such as the North Sand Hills.

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