

Reclaiming Wildways

Ellen Clark

All hands on deck! Wild Connections is excited and proud to announce that our first on-the-ground stewardship project, Reclaiming Wildways, will kick off in 2009.

With the completion of the *Wild Connections Conservation Plan*, all of the great strides we've made in our advocacy work and the connections we've made with so many other great organizations, we are well positioned to expand our work to include restoration. We're getting back to the field again! While the work we are planning is very important it is also going to be a whole lot of fun. We hope to see many of you out there with us. Read on to learn more about the Why, the What and the How Fun.



USFS says unmanaged recreation is one of top challenges. Photo by Ellen Clark.

Why restoration?

Animals need to move safely across the landscape to satisfy their needs for forage and breeding. Restrictions to migration corridors negatively impact all levels of biodiversity, leaving habitation fragmentation and loss one of the leading threats to biodiversity and the decline of species worldwide. But, off highway vehicle (OHV) use has

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Colorado's Roadless Areas May Lose Protection

Michael Rogers

Although the question of how to manage the remaining roadless lands in our nation has been debated for over 80 years, the last few years have been particularly intense. Most thought the debate was finally solved by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule put in force at the end of the Clinton administration. The 2001 Rule was the product of more than three years of deliberation and the most extensive federal rulemaking in history, with more than 600 public hearings and more than 1.6 million comments in favor of its protections (over 90% in favor).



Antelope Mountain with its meadows and view of the Sangres could be unprotected. Photo by Naomi Yoder

However, the new presidential administration in 2001 and various lawsuits have kept the debate ongoing. Right now, Colorado is set to receive a special rule, one that will determine the level of protection for Colorado's 4.4 million acres of roadless lands. Only Colorado, Idaho and part of Alaska will have less protection than backcountry lands in other states. Colorado's Roadless Areas deserve no less protection!

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Mission: Wild Connections, a science-based advocacy organization, works to identify, protect and restore lands of the Upper Arkansas and South Platte watersheds to ensure the survival of native species and ecological richness. We focus on designing, implementing and defending the Wild Connections Conservation Plan – a vision for the future of this region that embodies the results of many years of roadless area mapping, citizen input and conservation science.



December, 2008

Dear Friends,

It has been a busy year at Wild Connections – an exciting year of growth and change – and with your help, 2009 will bring more exciting changes to our work as we transition from a mapping and advocacy organization to a volunteer stewardship group. We will be putting the *Wild Connections Conservation Plan* into action with on-the-ground restoration projects to reclaim and restore critical habitat for the thousands of native species that rely on healthy ecosystems to thrive.

Among the changes we have experienced this past year are a new look – the new logo, a new Executive Director (that’s me), and many new friends and supporters. I am thrilled to be a part of this exciting time and to have a hand in this important work. I am looking forward to meeting many of you next year on hikes and field trips or when you volunteer to help us plant native grass seed and restore stream banks widened and eroded by illegal motor vehicle trespass.

We also welcome Lisa Smith, our newest Board Member, to our ranks. We are lucky to have her. Lisa’s extensive back country recreation and public lands organizing experience are certainly a benefit to Wild Connections. She is currently Public Lands Organizer for Colorado Environmental Coalition. Welcome Lisa!

I truly appreciate the support that all of you have provided Wild Connections. Without you, our work can not progress. As our staff and program capacity increases, so does our need for your help. Whether you support our work by writing comment letters to the Forest Service, or by volunteering to check boundaries or sow seeds, or with your dollars – every contribution helps us get one step closer to accomplishing our mission. I thank you.

Ellen



Connecting to the Landscape in New Ways

Wild Connections, along with the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, Pikes Peak Group of the Sierra Club, Mountain Park Environmental Center and other conservation groups have sponsored hikes since our inception 14 years ago. Some of these hikes were specifically designed to teach a new backcountry skill, while others explored some of the areas which deserve permanent protection for their solitude and character. All, have been fun!

We are looking for innovative and new ideas for hikes! Do you have special areas you'd specifically like to explore? Do you

We are looking for innovative and new ideas for hikes!

have ideas for fun activities, or specific skills you'd like to learn? We want to diversify our hikes schedule to accommodate

all levels of hikers, as well as keep travel time limited and thus maximize trail time! Please email any ideas to Michael@wildconnections.org. Thanks!

Hikes and field trips

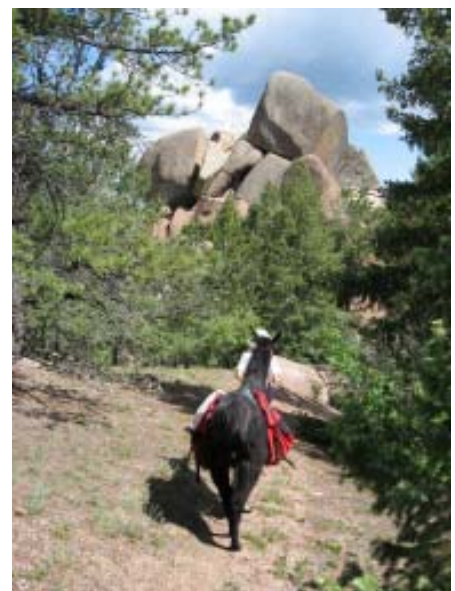
Wild Connections partnered with Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, Mountain Park Environmental Center and Pikes Peak Sierra Club to hike or map these roadless areas in 2008:

Badger Creek	Rampart Range
Big Union	Scraggy Peaks
Farnum	Table Mountain
Limbaugh Canyon	Thirtynine Mile
Marmot	Ring the Peak
McIntyre Hills	Scraggy Peaks
Pikes Peak West	Weston Peak
Grape Creek	

Participants numbered 120, of whom 50 were new contacts. We learned new skills and explored nature at its best. An expanded schedule will be offered in 2009. Watch our web site for details. ☞

Hiking with Llamas

This past summer Wild Connections had the opportunity to offer a unique hike – “Packing with Llamas.” Ten participants and five llamas joined in this unique hike into Limbaugh Canyon, just west of Palmer Lake. We especially thank Touch the Earth Llamas of Black Forest who donated the llamas and their expertise, teaching the group about using pack llamas on the trail. ☞



On the trail with llamas. Llamas donated by Touch the Earth Llamas, photos by Michael Rogers

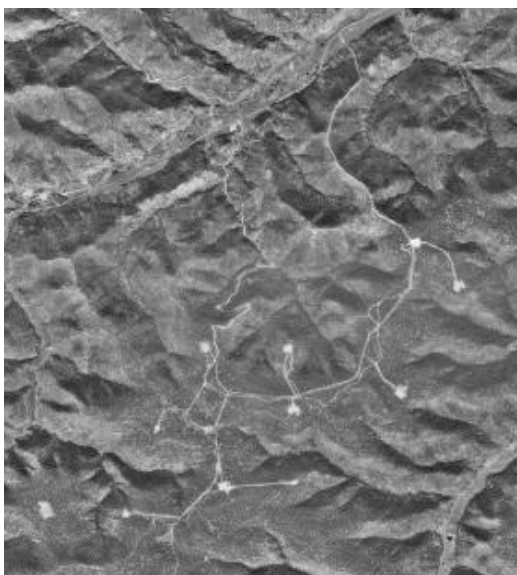
Drill here? Drill now?

We don't hear much about oil and gas production in south central Colorado. However, drilling around us in New Mexico, western Colorado and southern Wyoming affects everyone, even if we don't live in the shadow of a rig.

Wild Earth Guardians describes these problems.

- Ground water contamination is common with drinking water made undrinkable and wildlife affected.
- Ozone – beneficial to earth in the highest levels of the atmosphere is hazardous at ground level to those with respiratory problems. In Colorado's production areas, oil and gas operations are the largest source of benzene air pollution.
- Networks of roads, well pads, compressors and pipe lines fragment wildlife habitat and displace animals.
- Across the west places like the Roan Plateau in Colorado, Otero Mesa in New Mexico and Adobe Town in Wyoming are targeted for drilling.

For more information, see *To Drill or Not to Drill* at www.wildearthguardians.org/AboutUs/Publications/tabid/156/Default.aspx



Bosque del Oso West of Trinidad, Bosque del Oso State Wildlife Area is a network of coal bed methane wells. It was created by a joint partnership of the Montana Power Company, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Great Outdoors Colorado. CDOW paid \$9.1 million dollars for the 30,000 acres and Montana Power retained the mineral rights. Almost every drainage has a road with a nest of well pads. These roads are closed to public vehicles, but large company trucks regularly travel on them. The Purgatoire River and many mammals including a large elk herd are surely affected by the traffic, erosion and noise.

Mt. Herman

Residents in Monument are fighting proposed drilling on Mt. Herman where Dyad Petroleum proposes to drill exploratory wells. Front Range Energy Resource Coalition members have learned about all aspects of oil and gas operations and have presented their concerns in community meetings, to the media and to the Forest Service. A draft Environmental Analysis is being prepared by the Forest Service, but there will be no decision until Spring 2009. Visit www.frerc.org for details on this project.

The oil and gas industry is making record profits. They can afford to protect drinking water and wildlife habitat. As a society, we can commit to requiring technology and site locations that minimize environmental impacts, as well as investing in alternative renewable energy sources. ♻

Methane wells on one road in Bosque del Oso SWA



Methane compressor in Bosque del Oso State Wildlife Area. Photo Jean C. Smith

Conservation From Your Yard to the Continent

Conservation biologists have recognized that networks of protected core areas that are connected by wildlife linkages are among the best options to preserve biodiversity and native wildlife. The core areas provide secure quality habitat for a range of plants and animals; the linkages – or wildways – allow movement in response to large changes such as encroaching development or climate change, as well as avenues for seasonal migrations and dispersal of young animals. Core areas and wildways are integrally connected, addressing the unique needs of various species and occurring at all scales of geography.

Species

Concern about the viability of a particular species requires careful attention to their habitat and movement needs.



Greenback cutthroat trout,
Colorado Division of Wildlife

of insects.

For example, greenback cutthroat trout, now reduced to 5% of their former abundance, prefer cold, clear, gravelly headwater streams and mountain lakes where there is an abundance



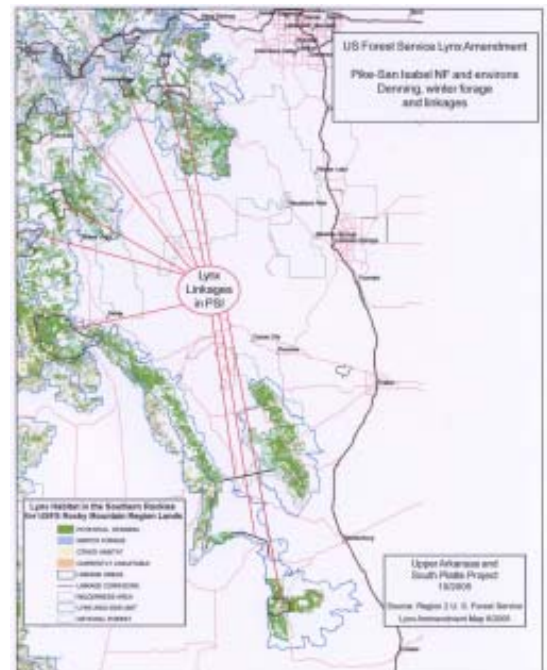
Canada lynx - Division of Wildlife

to raise their kittens and their preferred prey of snowshoe hare.

Lynx - extirpated in Colorado in the mid-1970's and reintroduced by the Division of Wildlife - prefer dense subalpine forest and willow-choked corridors along mountain streams and avalanche chutes.

Here they find secluded denning sites

The spatial dimension of wildways for a trout might be several miles of stream to ensure that subpopulations can intermingle for genetic diversity or move in response to food supplies. But the spatial needs for lynx are at least regional and perhaps even continental in scale. The Forest Service has identified lynx critical habitat and 38 linkages in Colorado and Southern Wyoming. These linkages are important for dispersing lynx, genetic interchange and movements between areas of best habitat



Beyond species

Providing for individual species is necessary, but it is not enough. A strategy is needed that addresses the larger relationships, particularly the formidable human artifacts that impede wildlife movements.

Dams block fish movements, fences force antelope to squeeze under, expanding oil and gas fields, increasing backcountry travel, and continued development in the interstices between secure areas are major barriers to wildlife.

Many partners are working on a bold vision of continental conservation:

The Wildlands Project and their partners conceive of mega-linkages along the spine of the continent and across the boreal forest. These linked wildlands networks are still the home to much of our largest and most important wildlife from caribou to grizzlies, mountain lions to jaguars, and all the smaller animals that live in harmony with them.



Patagonia has a multiyear conservation emphasis called Freedom to Roam. Wild Connections has a grant from Patagonia Denver for our Wildlands and Wildways work.

Mark Schaffer of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation was interviewed by the Nature Conservancy Magazine. He would like to see 12-25% of the American landscape in permanent “conservation status” for wildlife. The Nature Conservancy said “Realizing [this] goal of a national conservation system may well turn out to be one of the most influential forces in allowing the Conservancy to achieve its conservation goal in the United States.”

Continental scale wildways are clearly an enormous scientific, economic and political challenge. They will require cooperation from all sectors of society to transform the vision into practical conservation schemes and pay for the research, restoration, conservation planning and land purchases that will be needed.

What we can do

Obviously we can support these conservation organizations, educate ourselves and make comments on protected areas and migration to land management agencies.

But I’d like to suggest something more personal. First, join Wild Connections next summer as we launch the Reclaiming Wildways project. (See page 1)

Second, start thinking in the wildways mode. In your yard, or block, or nearby park there are wildways. The chipmunks at my house dash from the woodpile across the large (from a chipmunk’s perspective) gravel driveway to the relative safety of the garden next to the house, where they prefer parsley. However, in the fall, they travel from the woodpile close to the shed and house foundation to the bird feeder, where they pack their cheeks sunflower seeds. The fall “wildway” is safer for them.

Watch for your creatures, keep their wildways wild, and then imagine how this applies to the regional and continental scales. 🐿



Colorado chipmunk, photo by Jean C. Smith

Large scale conservation

- Patagonia *Freedom to Roam* campaign www.patagonia.com/web/us/patagonia.go?assetid=31723
- The Wildlands Project has descriptions of the components of their continental vision at www.twp.org/cms/page1179.cfm
- The Nature Conservancy interview with Mark Schaffer on his *Wild Idea* is at www.nature.org/magazine/autumn2008/features/art25533.html

Migration

- Smithsonian Institution *Pronghorn* www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/pronghorn.html#
- Wildlife Conservation Society *Path of the Pronghorn* www.wcs.org/globalconservation/northamerica/401875/pathofthepronghorn
- National Wildlife Federation *Perilous Journeys* www.nwf.org/nationalwildlife/article.cfm?issueID=124&articleId=1642

Founder retires

Jean Smith recognized the connection between biological diversity in the Southern Rockies and wild lands and ecological connections. To put her concern into action, in 1995 she founded the Upper Arkansas-South Platte Project, now known as Wild Connections. She was also a founding board member of the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project (SREP). For twelve years Wild Connections was staffed by Jean and other volunteers, who organized hundreds of citizens to do field mapping and other scientific research in our area.

Through the years Jean has worn many hats - volunteer coordinator and trainer, trip organizer, data manager, map-maker, grant writer, treasurer, conservation plan editor, newsletter editor, and many more—all as a volunteer and always moving the organization forward in implementing its mission. Under Jean’s guidance, Wild Connections has

grown to be the first group of its kind in central Colorado, dealing with a full spectrum of ecological concerns on public lands.

Michael Rogers says: “Through her dedication she has helped create SREP and Wild Connections. She is always seeking innovative solutions for new programs, funding, and our mission-related work. So, I’d praise her not for a single “big win” on a single campaign, but instead for ensuring and instilling her passionate approach in all of us, creating a sustainable organization for not just one campaign, but for many years to come.”

At the end of this year, Jean will retire from active management of Wild Connections, although she will continue with bookkeeping and the newsletter. She intends to do more birding and pursue other conservation interests. 🐾



Jean and Art Smith mapping in Long Scraggy

Mapping Long Scraggy

Jean Smith

Before I retire (again), I want tell a story about mapping Long Scraggy. After an initial foray by Dennis George, Art and I followed up with several more trips.

Art was the backbone of our mapping duo, and he never got lost. Except for that time in Long Scraggy when he stopped and said, “That rock cliff isn’t supposed to be there”. We had taken a wrong turn on

the network of old logging roads. We found old quartz quarries, and I still have the 20 pound white quartz that I stuffed in Art’s bike pannier. On the way back there was a drenching thunderstorm, but it produced the splendid picture of Long Scraggy above the remaining clouds.

Long Scraggy was the place where Art thought I was lost. We rode our bikes to the end of a logging road, and I was to bush-whack down to the closed ATV trail, and he

would meet me on the other end. Dennis, that trail you mapped was lost to sight even though I knew I was within 25 feet of it! I mucked around for a long time trying to find it before I finally abandoned my bike and followed Gunbarrel Creek out to Oxyoke. By the time I got out of there, it was nearly dark and Art had called the Sheriff. I wasn’t lost, only late. We had to go back in the next day and get my bike.

I remember the three giant ponderosas along the creek and the single prairie gayfeather next to a leafy spurge. I remember the view from the Colorado Trail across the Buffalo Creek burn toward Raleigh Peak. Several years later the Hayman fire burned into the south end of Long Scraggy.

This adventure with Wild Connections has been challenging and fulfilling. It took a great team of competent citizen-scientists, dedicated Board members and now a professional staff to get where we are. My thanks to all of you for making it possible. 🐾



Long Scraggy after the storm. Photo by Jean C. Smith

Reclaiming Wildways ... continued from page 1

increased dramatically in recent years, resulting in unplanned roads that cross streams, cause erosion and loss of habitat and fragment roadless areas. The Forest Service Chief has identified unmanaged recreation as one of the top challenges to forest management.

In 2009 we will build on the relationships we have formed with the Forest Service and other conservation organizations to address unmanaged recreation with on-the-ground stewardship. We are now putting carefully shod feet on the ground to restore troubled and essential lands.

As part of our *Reclaiming Wildways* project we will be partnering with Boulder-based Wildlands Restoration Volunteers. They have agreed to serve as our Technical Advisor and teach us their proven methods of ground scarification and revegetation, as well as their knack for making forest stewardship projects into community building, fun volunteer experiences. They will also provide training for our crew leaders. Colorado Mountain Club and Coalition for the Upper South Platte will be helping us as well.



This route off the Rampart Range road is no longer on the Motorized Vehicle Use Map. It is a candidate for restoration. Photo by Ellen Clark

The Forest Service staffs of both the South Platte and Pikes Peak Ranger Districts are enthusiastic about these projects, and have helped us choose sites that are high on their priority list – sites where resource damage is seriously impacting forest health.

Our volunteer crews will be closing illegal user created routes along Rampart Range, sowing native grass seed, installing erosion control matting, and restoring stream banks eroded by motorized recreation that trespass off designated roads.

The sites that we've selected for this coming season include habitats essential for two federally threatened species: the Preble's meadow jumping mouse and the Pawnee montane skipper. So, while serving our broader goal of restoring roadless areas on behalf of the unique species that call them home and on behalf of the future generations who will enjoy them, we have a fun and exciting opportunity to increase the survival chances of some threatened species special to Colorado.

In between sowing seeds and closing roads we will share great meals, have plenty of fun and wrap up the season with a celebration including live music. As a volunteer you can expect to make new friends, do important work and have so much fun doing it, you'll want to bring your friends along. 🐾

Of mice and butterflies

Pawnee montane Skippers and Preble's meadow jumping mice are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

The skipper is found



Pawnee montane skipper (*Hesperia leonardus montana*), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Counties: Blue

are the primary foods.

The mice live in or near shrubby riparian areas along the Front Range from Colorado Springs into southeastern Wyoming. In late summer, the mice gorge on seeds, fruits and insects and then hibernate in underground burrows from September to May.



Preble's meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius preblei*), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

No Child Left Inside

Carol Stansfield

Parents, grandparents, and teachers are becoming increasingly concerned: our children are spending less and less time outdoors exploring the natural world. Many children today think of nature as unsafe, uncomfortable, and uninteresting. This alienation from nature is contributing to growing rates of obesity and



Children - and adults - thrive in the outdoors, exploring and learning firsthand about nature. Photo by Arthur Smith

people, and denying the joys of childhood. We are deeply about our planet can't help children care for and they have never spent

Last Child in the Wilderness by Richard Louv, a national, educational, and environmental effects of our children's lives.

On October 3, the Pikes Peak area was filled with displays from various organizations and agencies that have an interest in outdoor activities. Wild Connections, Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition and Pikes Peak Sierra Club shared adjoining tables, but we had strong competition from the live animals at the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo table!

Richard Louv then spoke to an audience of about 1,300 at the Pikes. His message was one of deep concern but also one of hope. He recalled, as a young boy, discovering his

very own "special place" outdoors, to which he returned again and again to explore the natural world. He reminded us that every great naturalist and environmental leader was first inspired by life-changing

experiences in nature as a child. Finally, he charged us all - parents, teachers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and next door neighbors - to help the young people in our lives find their own special place in nature.

Richard Louv's inspiring talk was followed by a "No Child Left Inside" weekend of outdoor activities for children and their families, sponsored by a remarkable partnership of outdoor and environmental organizations in the Pikes Peak region.

This marked the beginning of an ongoing effort to help our children reconnect with nature. Wild Connections will be expanding our hikes program to include opportunities for children and their families to enjoy the natural world together. We will be exploring ways to support environmental education in our neighborhoods and schools.

You can become part of "No Child Left Inside" by doing three simple things. First, we encourage you to read Richard Louv's wonderful book. The new expanded edition is available in local libraries and bookstores. Next, think of the children in your life, and ask yourself if they are having the same chances to explore nature that you had as a child. Then, invite them to join you the next time you go to visit your own special outdoor place.

Carol is an Environmental Educator and cofounder - recently retired - of Academy School District 20's School in the Woods. Students spend their fourth grade year at the "living classroom" in the Black Forest where a significant part of instructional time is spent outdoors, actively exploring and learning about the living ecosystems on the 640-acre property. Students make scientific observations of changing weather, water, and soil conditions, plants and animals.

...will our children care for and defend the earth if they have never spent time in wild places?

No Child Was Left Inside at the Fossil Beds

Inspired by a well-attended talk from Richard Louv, the man who coined the phrase “nature-deficit disorder” to describe children who rarely play outdoors, families swarmed Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument on Saturday, October 4th, for the first “No Child Left Inside Weekend” in Colorado.

Discovery hikes, a mock fossil “dig,” an appearance by a wolf pup and presentations on wildfire and outdoor survival highlighted the program.

The monument was one of more than a dozen agencies, outdoor groups and camps in the Pikes Peak region to stage weekend activities aimed at getting TV- and video-obsessed kids outside.

“They totally blew the doors off the peak-attendance day for this year,” said Superintendent Keith Payne of Florissant Fossil Beds, which co-sponsored a weekend-opening appearance by Richard Louv, author of the best-selling *Last Child in the Woods*.

Two National Park Service Junior Rangers with nearly 400 badges and patches between them – Chandler Johnson, 12, of

Rome, Georgia, and Tara Sams, a high school junior from Colorado Springs – administered the Junior Ranger oath to more than 125 children at the monument, located 30 miles west of Colorado Springs. Kids also took home “No Child Left Inside” T-shirts on which they pressed their own handprints in fabric paint.

The night before, Louv was introduced by Johnson, who at age six earned her first Junior Ranger badge at Florissant Fossil Beds. In the six years since, she has earned badges and patches from 250 NPS sites in 48 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. She said visiting the park has given her “an education that you can’t get in the classroom or on a computer.”



Excerpted from Inside NPS. Thanks to Jeff Wolin, Fossil Beds Park Ranger, who sent the information and photo.

Junior Rangers at Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Photo by National Park Service

I want to help Wild Connections

Here’s my check for \$1,000 \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$

I’d prefer pay in installments: \$.....Monthly \$.....Quarterly beginning

Name

Address city state zip

Phone Email

- Send me E-News
- Send Landscapes by e-mail
- Put my name on the list of potential volunteers for Reclaiming Wildways

Mail to **Wild Connections**
1420 Pinewood Road, Florissant CO 80816
 or go to www.wildconnections.org to donate on line.

Address service requested

Meeting the Challenge

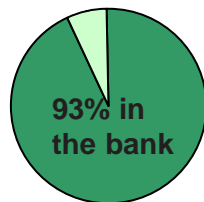


EARTH FRIENDS
 WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Earth Friends Wildlife Foundation's grant for 2008 challenged Wild Connections to raise \$30,000 from *new* sources.

We're almost there with 93% of it in the bank.

Don't stop now! Help complete this challenge and build a strong base for 2009. New contributions or any increase above your 2007 giving all counts.



Reclaiming Wildways

Wild Connections' first on-the-ground stewardship project, Reclaiming Wildways, will kick off in 2009. Volunteer crews will be closing illegal user created routes along Rampart Range, sowing native grass seed, installing erosion control matting, and restoring stream banks eroded by motorized recreation that trespass off designated roads. See page 1 for details.



Sign Up for E-News

Are you receiving our E-News? If not, then please provide your email to Michael@wildconnections.org or go to www.wildconnections.org to sign up! This monthly email newsletter is designed to keep you up to date on upcoming hikes, presentations, and provide succinct factual news on issues facing our local public lands in a cost effective and timely manner. We only send out Landscapes twice a year, so E-News is your source for up-to-date information! Please sign up!

