

Wild Connections E-News

February, 2008

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Dear Michael,

Welcome to Wild Connections' inaugural monthly *e-newsletter*! Our goal is to send succinct and factual information spotlighting issues affecting our local public lands - the Pike-San Isabel National Forest and Bureau of Land Management Royal Gorge area. This new tool is part of our growth from the Upper Arkansas South Platte Project into Wild Connections. We value your interest, we do not share our email lists, and we will not send fundraising appeals by email - only monthly news features and occasional, time-sensitive alerts.

Please take a moment to add us to your address book or safe list to ensure you continue to receive critical news about our local public lands.

Colorado's Roadless Areas at Risk - Again

Your comments needed by February 25th

On December 26th, directed by the Bush administration, the U.S. Forest Service announced the start of a Colorado-specific rulemaking process. Colorado will become one of only two states in the nation that will have weaker protections for these precious backcountry lands! Speak out now to protect Colorado's 4.4 million acres of undeveloped Forest Service lands.

The U.S. Forest Service is accepting comments on this proposal **until February 25, 2008**. For more information and a sample comment letter [Click here or scroll down...](#)



Mt. Elbert Roadless Area. Photo by Rob Koran.

Cooperative Law Enforcement Bill Awaits Senate Vote

Adding Boots on the Ground

Did you know?

- Colorado has 14 million acres of national forests and 8 million acres run by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.
- Colorado has only 18 forest rangers and 8 BLM officers dedicated to law enforcement, approximately one officer for every 850,000 acres!

But change is on the way! HB 1069 would grant the authority for any state peace

office to enforce federal travel management violations. [Click here for more or scroll down...](#)

Upcoming Hikes & Events

Come Join Us

Saturday, February 9

Ski and Snowshoe Thirty-nine Mile Mountain Proposed Wilderness

Thirty-nine Mile Mountain forms the high southern rim of South Park overlooking Elevenmile Reservoir and the Arkansas Valley. [Click here for hike details or scroll down...](#)

Chipeta Roadless Area. Photo by Roman Boergerding.



Saturday, March 15

Table Mountain Proposed Wilderness Day hike

Second in a series of outings to the Wild Ten areas in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007. Visit all of the local areas in the legislation during winter and spring 2008. [Click here for hike details or scroll down...](#)

Coming in April, 2008 - Colorado Wilderness Bi-Annual Conference

The next statewide wilderness conference is intended to engage and educate both novice and experienced wilderness activists. [Click here for event details or scroll down...](#)

Thank you for your passion for Colorado's public lands! If you have comments or questions about our new *e-news* or the topics above, please email Michael Rogers, *Executive Director* at: Michael@WildConnections.org.

Coming in the March *e-news*, the Pike-San Isabel is implementing the Travel Management Rule by publishing motor vehicle use maps. Learn about the process, and what it means to you as a public lands user.

Sincerely,
Michael Rogers

Executive Director
Wild Connections

UASPP, d.b.a. Wild Connections, is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our mission is to identify, protect and restore lands of the Upper Arkansas and South Platte watersheds to ensure the survival of native species and ecological richness.

Colorado's Roadless Areas are at risk – again

Your comments needed by February 25th

On December 26th, directed by the Bush administration, the U.S. Forest Service announced the start of a Colorado-specific rulemaking process. Colorado will become one of only two states in the nation that will have weaker protections for these precious backcountry lands! Speak out now to protect Colorado's 4.4 million acres of undeveloped Forest Service lands.

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The Value of Protecting Backcountry Lands:

We all fundamentally know that wild, undeveloped and unspoiled lands are essential providers of natural services such as clean drinking water and clean air. They are also critical for wildlife as they allow undisturbed birthing areas, protected winter habitats when animals are at their most vulnerable, and key migration corridors. Roadless lands offer opportunities for scientific research on natural ecosystems, providing important baseline data to evaluate our changing world.

But these peaceful lands also provide people with invaluable experiences and unique opportunities for quiet recreation such as hiking, cross-county skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and fishing.

Here are a just a few of the roadless areas that may be adversely impacted by the new rule!

- **Mt. Elbert Roadless Area** – home of our highest 14'er;
- **Burning Bear Roadless Area** – find solitude within an hour and a half drive from Denver;
- **Chipeta Roadless Area** – critical lynx habitat and heart of a top-tier lynx migration corridor as defined by the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project;
- **Scraggy Peaks** – open for explorers young and old alike while visiting the Mountain Park Environmental Center;
- **Pikes Peak Roadless Area** – a tourist destination coupled with key water storage facilities (all compatible with the 2001 rule); and
- **Browns Canyon Roadless Area** – currently awaiting Wilderness designation, protecting the scenic backdrop for the most popular rafting river in America.

Colorado is only one of two states in the nation being subjected to weaker protections of our valuable roadless areas! Colorado's roadless areas are currently protected under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, but the current proposal would greatly weaken this legal protection, opening the door to mining, logging, and road construction in our roadless backcountry. Add your voice to help Wild Connections protect these lands for the people, for the wildlife, for the future.

How You Can Help

Please tell the Forest Service that you want all of Colorado's roadless areas protected by the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Inform the U.S. Forest Service that Colorado's lands deserve no less protection than roadless areas in other states!

Please customize and sign the letter below and email it to the Forest Service at the address provided. We encourage you to include your own personal comments as emails are much more effective when you add your personal experiences or beliefs. Be sure to include your full name and postal address. Your letter must be received by February 25th

SAMPLE COMMENT LETTER

Roadless Area Conservation - Colorado
P.O. Box 162909
Sacramento, CA 95816-2909
Email: COcomments@fsroadless.org
Fax: 916-456-6724

Subject: Keep the 2001 Roadless Rule for Colorado

Dear Kathy Kurtz and Colorado Roadless Team:

One-third of Colorado's National Forests are roadless backcountry. These lands are the heart of the wild areas left in the Rockies and provide vital habitats for fish and wildlife and watersheds that supply clean drinking water. They are valuable for hunters, hikers, anglers and everyone who wants to keep Colorado special. These pristine areas represent our western and our national heritage and it is our duty to protect them so that future generations may enjoy them as well.

Time and again, the citizens of Colorado have repeated their strong support for the protection of Colorado's roadless areas, and roadless areas throughout the nation, embodied in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. They have said so both during the initial public hearings that led to adoption of the 2001 national rule and again during public meetings in 2005-06 held by the state's Roadless Areas Task Force. We are asking that you allow these protections to remain in place in Colorado as well as the rest of the country.

The proposed Colorado-specific rule does not reflect the overwhelming public desire to protect these irreplaceable wild lands. We ask that you not approve any state-specific rulemaking that would create less protection for Colorado's roadless areas than that currently enjoyed by roadless areas throughout the nation under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

If you can, please customize your letter here for additional impact by adding your personal comments and experiences or by including any of the points below...

Sincerely,
YOUR NAME
CITY, STATE

Additional Points of Impact for Letters:

- The Roadless Area Conservation Rule of 2001 was the result of the most extensive public process in the history of federal rulemaking — one that generated approximately 1.6 million comments, more than 90% of those in favor of protecting our Roadless heritage.
- The federal courts have upheld the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule which is now in effect nationally. Colorado's roadless backcountry lands deserve no less protection!
- The 2001 Roadless Rule is the national status quo. It maintains current access for hunting, camping, fishing, hiking. Please do not jeopardize our valued recreation opportunities.
- The 2001 Roadless Rule is already flexible enough where it needs to be. Changing the 2001 Rule provisions threatens to weaken and thus void the intended protection of these critical lands.
- In 2006, the Colorado Division of Wildlife fully supported protection of Colorado's roadless backcountry under the 2001 Roadless Rule to protect critical habitat for big game and other wildlife.
- Road construction should not be allowed in roadless areas, except for emergencies. The 2001 rule already provides an adequate exception for emergency access to protect life and public safety.
- The 2001 rule already allows adequate flexibility for fuel treatment projects to protect life and property. Any broader authority places these valuable lands at risk for inappropriate logging projects.
- The first primitive area inventory on national forests was conducted in the mid-1920s by inventorying 74 tracts larger than 200,300 acres. By the 1970s, fifty years of road building left the Forest Service to consider areas larger than 5,000 acres to be primitive backcountry lands and eligible for inventory. If we don't conserve these lands now, what will we have left to inventory in another 50 years?
- Roadless backcountry lands provide vital migration corridors, key habitat such as birthing areas, and other ecosystem benefits such as clean water for Coloradoans.
- Remote backcountry lands areas provide the opportunity for solitude, a commodity ever increasing in value in our society. This is cherished by hikers seeking solace from the daily grind; anglers seeking the best trout fishing in pristine, cold waters; hunters wanting to connect with their prey in the way humans have done for millennia; or the birder wanting to hear the distant warbler. Coloradoans need the 2001 Rule to maintain this quality of life.

For more information on the history of the roadless rule including the current Colorado petition process, visit Colorado's Forest Legacy at: www.roadless.net.

Cooperative Law Enforcement Bill Awaits Senate Vote

Adding boots to the ground

Did you know?

- Colorado has 14 million acres of national forests and 8 million acres run by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.
- Colorado has only 18 forest rangers and 8 BLM officers dedicated to law enforcement, approximately one officer for every 850,000 acres!

But change is on the way! HB 1069 would grant the authority for any state peace officer to enforce federal travel management violations.

The Colorado Mountain Club is spearheading an effort to organize a very diverse group of constituents - including but not limited to the Colorado Wildlife Federation, Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition, Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and the Colorado Snowmobile Association to address the issue of lack of enforcement officers in the field.

The result is HB 1069, known as the Cooperative Law Enforcement Bill, sponsored by State Rep. Kathleen Curry (D-Gunnison) and State Sen. Lois Tochtrop (D-Denver). This landmark bill would grant the authority for any state peace officer to enforce federal travel management violations. This will add over 150 Law Enforcement Officers, boots on the ground, to help support the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in the implementation of their new travel management plans and policies (more on travel management in the *March e-news*).

The bill has passed the State House, and is slated to go before the Senate within a few weeks. Please take a moment to thank the bill sponsors for their dedication to protecting the lands we love through their innovative bill. Further, please call your State Senator to urge them to vote yes on the Senate version of HB 1069. For the Senate contact directory, go to: <http://www.leg.state.co.us/>.

HB 1069 Sponsor Contacts:

Representative Kathleen Curry
200 E. Colfax
Denver, CO 80203
Capitol Phone: 303-866-2945
E-mail: kathleen.curry.house@state.co.us

Senator Lois Tochtrop
200 E. Colfax
Denver, CO 80203
Capitol Phone: 303-866-4863
E-mail: lotochtrop@aol.com

Upcoming Hikes & Events

Come Join Us

Saturday, February 9

Ski and Snowshoe! Thirty-nine Mile Mountain Proposed Wilderness

7:30 am-5:00 pm (*times are depart/return to Colorado Springs*)

Thirty-nine Mile Mountain forms the high southern rim of South Park overlooking Elevenmile Reservoir and the Arkansas Valley. This trip, sponsored by Pikes Peak Sierra Club, CCWC, and Wild Connections, will explore a riparian valley on the north side of the mountain. Participants need skis or snowshoes and intermediate skills in using them on this moderately strenuous six mile trip with 700 foot elevation gain. Learn about the wilderness potential of Thirty-nine Mile Mountain and other nearby Wild Ten areas. For more information and to register, contact John Stansfield, 303-660-5849 or e-mail jorcstan@juno.com by 4 PM, February 8.

Saturday, March 15

Table Mountain Proposed Wilderness Day hike

7:30 am-5:30 pm (*times are depart/return to Colorado Springs*)

(*Weather backup March 16*)

Second in a series of outings to the Wild Ten areas in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007. Visit all of the local areas in the legislation during winter and spring 2008. Year-round hiking is just one wild benefit found in rough and rocky Table Mountain, on the north slope of the Arkansas River canyon west of Royal Gorge. Sponsored by Pikes Peak Sierra Club, CCWC, and Wild Connections, this moderately strenuous off-trail hike of up to seven miles and less than 1,000 feet in elevation gain explores scenic Hindman Gulch. We will look for bighorn sheep along the way. Come learn about the Wild Ten and their potential for future wilderness designation. For more information and to register, contact John Stansfield, 303-660-5849 or e-mail jorcstan@juno.com by 4 PM March 14.

Coming in April, 2008 – Colorado Wilderness Bi-Annual Conference

The next statewide wilderness conference will engage and educate both novice and experienced wilderness activists. Designed with tangible outcomes in mind, the event will strive to make wilderness an election campaign issue. Candidates and elected officials will be among the presenters.

- **Conference dates:** Friday April 4 (evening) through Sunday, April 6.
- **Location:** Grand Junction
- **Registration:** More information to come in future Wild Connections newsletters