

Wild Connections E-News

June, 2008

In This Issue

Support Browns Canyon

Do We Need More Wilderness?

Roadless Areas Tour Report

What Happened With?

Executive Director Job Opening

Upcoming Hikes & Events

Quick Links

Get Involved

Support Our Work

Newsletter Archive

About Wild Connections

About CCWC

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Dear Michael,

The natural world is full of mystique. Did you know toads live in our forests? Can you identify the 10 most beautiful wildflowers? Can you help the lynx that is busy looking for wildways (and snowshoe hares)? Have you heard that llamas are related to camels? While the top-ten list of wildflowers depends on the person, the rest of these intriguing facts are science. Are you curious to learn more about our wild public lands?

Browns Canyon Wilderness Bill Reintroduced in Congress Bill would protect critical, low-elevation public land

Last month, Senator Ken Salazar re-introduced Browns Canyon wilderness legislation. These stunning wild lands lie in Representative Doug Lamborn's district, in which you live. Winning Rep. Lamborn's support for this wilderness legislation is key, and you can shape his position on this issue since you are his constituent and he cares about your opinion. Call or write Rep. Lamborn today to exercise your influence in support of Colorado wilderness by asking that he support the Browns Canyon Wilderness legislation (S. 3066) introduced by Sen. Salazar!



Enjoying year-round hiking in Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area. Help us ensure its future!

For more information on Browns Canyon and a sample letter, [please click here...](#)

Do We Need More Wilderness? A Conservation Biology Perspective

Recently, wilderness rangers and staff of the US Forest Service held their annual training in Westcliffe, Colorado. Wild Connections was invited to be a guest presenter on one of the panels. The question: "Do we need more Wilderness?" This commonly asked question usually sparks some passionate viewpoints. Here is the impassionate, scientific answer: "Yes, we do need more Wilderness, but more importantly, we need **more low-elevation** Wilderness."

Did you know that here in the Pike-San Isabel National Forest, high elevation vegetation types (barren lands, exposed rock and spruce-fir forests) together make up almost 25% of the total Pike-San Isabel. But those same cover types make up 48% of the vegetation protected as Wilderness. Let's compare this with ponderosa pine, forests, which make up about 16% of the forest, but **less than 2%** is protected within Wilderness, leaving ponderosa pine dependent species at more risk.

What about the fact that **over 70%** of the lands protected as Wilderness in the Southern Rockies is **over 10,000 feet** in elevation!



Collegiate Peaks Wilderness viewed from a low-elevation citizen proposed wilderness area.

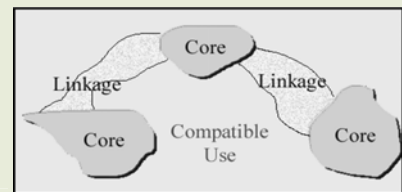
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Why is Protecting Low-Elevation Lands Important?

Low-elevation lands are the critical heart of the broader ecosystem for many reasons. First, even in high mountain ranges, if you look down in the valley at the lowest portion in the area, what do you usually see? Down in the valley at your feet you will find water, streams, rivers and ponds which also create riparian habitats. Not only is the water critical for wildlife (and fishing), riparian areas have proportionately higher diversity and plant density. Unfortunately, many times when you look down into the valley you also see roads, houses or cabins, human-built infrastructure, and private lands that have been altered from their natural state. Since the majority of riparian and valley corridors are in private ownership, those that are part of our public lands heritage are of the highest importance to protect their natural process, beauty and biodiversity.

Re-connecting the Landscape

The answer can be found in the "Core-Reserve Model." In the early 1980's, scientists started scratching their heads. Conservationists over the last century had set aside huge 'core' areas, areas which were still fairly pristine and thus had vast ecological value. These 'core' areas were preserved mostly by our National Parks system (Rocky Mountain, Yellowstone, Glacier, Denali and Yosemite). However, species were still disappearing from the huge 'cores,' or better defined as islands in a sea of development and unprotected lands. Without corridors, animals were unable to move during seasonal storms, migrate, or literally connect with other animals to enhance genetic diversity. Ensuring that wildways that connect these core areas has become one of the most important tasks for public lands conservationists of this decade.



The "Core Reserve Model" depicted visually in the above graphic. Linkages, or "wildways," balance human uses with wildlife needs to migrate across the landscape.

Why Wilderness?

Conservation Biology is focused on the long-term, perpetual, health of our ecosystems. To create a Wilderness Area, it takes a formal act by the US Congress. Because of this, it is the only permanent tool that conservations truly have for protecting the 'core' areas. Of course, not every large 'core' area either should be, or could be, a designated Wilderness Area. Conservationists had relied on the Roadless Rule to afford a high-level of protection for these vital areas, while allowing more management flexibility and recreational access such as mountain biking. As discussed in other E-News', the Roadless Rule is open to political whims. Wilderness is vital, as it is our only tool to preserve these areas in perpetuity.

For more information on Wild Connections' philosophy of public lands management, or for to learn more about conservation biology as it applies to our local public lands, take a look at the "Wild Connections Conservation Plan," our vision of Forest Service best-practice management of the Pike-San Isabel National Forest and surrounding public lands. The document is available on our website at www.wildconnections.org.

E-News continued on the next page – please read on...

Roadless Areas of the Pike-San Isabel

Wild Connections Reports on Successful Events

Wild Connections hosted a "Roadless Roadshow" in 6 communities around our forest in early June. This free public presentation discussed the ecological values of Roadless areas, provided facts pertaining to the current management of these areas such as fire management flexibility, and provided trails and hiking information so you can go explore Roadless areas in your own backyard.



Hiking in Roadless backcountry, "ah the solitude!"

Our thanks to all those who attended! We will provide the slideshow on our website, along with some of the "hidden Roadless treasure trails" detailed information. If you missed the show, we will be holding another presentation in Denver in July (date to be determined), or if your conservation group would like a presentation, we are available!

Stay tuned for more information on the draft Colorado Roadless Rule which will be out for public comment shortly.

What Happened With?

The Colorado Roadless Rulemaking first round of public comment closed on February 25th. The Forest Service is now writing a draft Colorado Roadless Rule, to be released in June. Attend one of our Community Presentations described above, and see our archive for additional information. Stay tuned as Colorado citizens will again need to speak up for preserving our backcountry lands.

Publication of Pike-San Isabel Motorized Use Maps - The Pike-San Isabel staff are working hard to complete their third motorized travel map. With the South Platte Ranger District and Cimarron Grasslands maps completed, the San Carlos District map is almost ready! The publication of motor vehicle use maps is a mile-stone for land-protection. These free maps will, for the first time, clearly define the official motorized road and trail system. For more background, please see our [March E-News](#).

For more background information, please [visit our issue archives](#).

Wild Connections Seeks Executive Director

Do you know of a qualified candidate? Maybe you?

Wild Connections is growing with the addition of our second staff member in order to meet the challenges and demands of effectively protecting our 2.5 million acres of public lands in our backyard! Through generous donations from individuals, organizations and foundations, we are working to increase our ability to help you learn about and become active in our public lands legacy. [Click here for the full job description...](#)

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Upcoming Hikes & Events

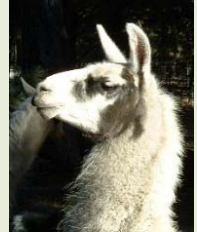
Come Join Us!

Saturday, June 21

Packing with Llamas day hike in Front Range Roadless Area.

Only a few spots left! Reserve yours today.

Have you always wanted to hike with a pack llama? This is your chance! Learn about llamas (and yes they are related to camels), and learn about using pack stock on the trail. Llamas have generously been donated by Touch the Earth Llamas - [Click for hike details...](#)



"Moonshadow"

Saturday, June 28 through Sunday June 29

Marmot Peak Beginner Backpack (Overnight trip)

This is the second in a series of summer-long outings offering basic wilderness skills instruction in the Wild Ten Areas. The hike will include basic backpacking skills such as site selection and minimum impact camping. Participants must have or rent basic backpacking gear - [Click for hike details...](#)



Hiking in Marmot Peak Roadless Area.

Saturday, June 28

Scraggy Peaks Roadless Area day hike

Scraggy Peaks is an important low elevation roadless area in the Wet Mountains west of Beulah. Sponsored by Wild Connections, Mountain Park Environmental Center and the Sangre de Cristo Group of the Sierra Club - [Click for hike details...](#)

Sunday, July 13

Basic Wildflower Identification Skills day hike to Big Union Proposed Wilderness.

Third in a summer-long series of outings offering basic wilderness skills instruction in the Wild Ten areas. Mid-July is prime high country wildflower time. Learn the basics of wildflower identification in the splendid surroundings of Big Union, a proposed addition to the Buffalo Peaks Wilderness. The moderate hike, sponsored by Pikes Peak Sierra Club, CCWC, and Wild Connections, will gain a maximum of 500 feet in elevation over three miles spent moving slowly from one flower patch to another. [Click for hike details...](#)



Hmmm, this flower reminds me of Colorado. Why?

July - Date to be determined

Boreal Toad Inventory Hike

Did you know toads live at high-elevations in our forests? Well, they used to live abundantly here, now they are endangered here in Colorado. Come learn about these fascinating creatures by joining this easy-to-moderate level hike while explore one of the few known areas which they currently live. We will be lead by a Colorado Division of Wildlife volunteer who is conducting a field inventory of Boreal toads. Date and Location TBA - [Check our website for updates.](#)

E-News continued on the next page – please read on...

July - Date to be determined
Lynx Habitat Exploratory Hike

[Check our website for updates.](#)

Saturday, August 16

Basic Map and Compass Skills day hike to
Weston Peak Proposed Wilderness.

Fourth in a summer-long series of outings offering basic wilderness skills instruction in the Wild Ten areas. Even in the era of GPS navigation, learning to find your way with topographic map and compass is fun--and can even save your life. [Click for hike details...](#)



Mom went to look for a safe wild-way passage.

Our website has full trip details, pictures and additional outings.

Please [visit our website](#) for full information, including any trip changes.

In Closing:

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, *Interim Executive Director* at: Michael@WildConnections.org.

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.