Continental Divide
Wilderness and Recreation Act
Table of Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
Support List ......................................................................................................................... 3
Letters of Support ............................................................................................................... 5
Select Media Clips, Editorials and Op Eds ....................................................................... 18

-John Fielder (Hoosier Ridge Proposed Wilderness)
Introduction

The backcountry near Colorado’s Continental Divide features vibrant vistas and unique recreational experiences that drive the local economies of Summit and Eagle counties.

Representative Jared Polis has introduced the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act to protect the natural beauty, outdoor recreation, historic resources, and wildlife habitats of Summit and eastern Eagle counties. The Act would create 40,000 acres of new wilderness areas in the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range, and Hoosier Ridge and would expand the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest, and Ptarmigan Peak wilderness areas. The bill also would enhance outdoor recreation opportunities such as fishing, hunting, biking, and backcountry snow sports. For example, it would establish an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area along the Tenmile Range to provide world-class mountain biking, hiking, and wildlife watching.

This plan was drafted through an open, collaborative process that not only maintains existing recreational uses, but also incorporates community values by accounting for future improvements.
Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act
Support List

**Businesses**
Arapahoe Basin Ski Resort
Alpine Accents - Frisco
Frisco Liquors Inc. - Frisco
Summit Travel - Frisco
Anew You - Frisco
Moose Jaw Restaurant - Frisco
Frisco Wine Merchant - Frisco
House of Signs, Inc. - Frisco
Deli Belly’s - Frisco
Frisco Fun and Formal - Frisco
Smokn’ Bra - Frisco
Little Beans Boutique - Frisco
The Jumping Tree - Frisco
Abbey’s Coffee - Frisco
Funky Truck - Frisco
Todd Powell Photography - Frisco
Frisco Lodge - Frisco
Log Cabin Cafe - Frisco
Dillon Dam Brewery - Dillon
Art Supply Breck - Breckenridge
Boutique Bling - Breckenridge
Timeless Collections - Breckenridge
b’s Modern Mountain Apothecary - Breckenridge
Bella Design and Planning - Breckenridge
Breckenridge Bead Gallery - Breckenridge
Big City Blues Clothing - Breckenridge
Flourish - Breckenridge
Vertical Runner - Breckenridge
Slopestyle - Breckenridge
The Mountain Goat Clothing Company - Breckenridge
Columbine Bakery - Avon
Haute Route Gear and Apparel - Avon
Skea Ltd. - Vail
Bloomingvails - Vail
Gorsuch Ltd. - Vail
Ptarmigan Sports - Edwards
Crazy Mountain Brewery - Edwards
Minick Construction - Edwards
Vail Valley Anglers - Edwards
Riverwalk Natural Health Clinic and Pharmacy - Edwards
Mary Lynn Gillaspie Photography - Louisville
Nina’s Flowers - Louisville
Ville de Luxe Boutique - Louisville
The Walnut Gallery - Louisville
By Chance Shoppe - Louisville
Gifts at Cooper’s Corner - Louisville
Found Underground Consignments - Louisville
Gifted Hands Gallery - Louisville
Little Horse Books and Vintage - Louisville
The Book Cellar - Louisville
SoFlo Glass LLC. - Boulder
Faith Davis Massage and Yoga - Boulder
Trident Booksellers and Cafe - Boulder
Nomad Bead Merchants - Boulder
Two Hands Paperie - Boulder
Rocky Mountain Anglers - Boulder
Bedell and Co. - Boulder
Colorado Ocean Coalition - Boulder
Justins LLC. - Boulder
Spork and Ladle, LLC. - Boulder
Eco-Products - Boulder
Vail Resorts - Broomfield
Xcel Energy - Denver
Powder7.com - Golden
Vision Ridge Partners - Boulder
High Country Dogs - Silverthorne
Boulder Cycle Sport - Boulder
Grappa - Vail
West Vail Liquors - Vail
Gorsuch Ltd - Vail
Wilderness Sports - Dillon
Backpacker’s Pantry - Boulder
Breckenridge Outfitters - Breckenridge
Mountain Angler - Breckenridge
RINO Bike & Snow Repair - Denver
Alpine Mountain Recreation - Breckenridge
Vail Valley Anglers - Vail
Fishpond USA - Silverthorne
Flyfisher Outfitters - Avon
Baloons Over Vail - Vail
Ground Works - Vail
Lionshead Liquors - Vail
Los Amigos Restaurant - Vail
Paragon Guides - Vail
Russell’s Restaurant - Vail
Wendy Griffith Phototag - Vail
West Vail Liquor Mart - Vail
Sonnenalp Real Estate - Vail
Women’s Empowerment Workshop - Susie Kincaid

Organizations:
Access Fund
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center
Conservation Alliance
Conservation Colorado
High Country Conservation Center
International Mountain Bicycling Association
League of Conservation Voters
Outdoor Industry Association
People for Bikes
ProgressNow
Public Land Solutions
Summit Fat Tire Society
The Wilderness Society
Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association
Vet Voice Foundation
Wilderness Workshop

Government(s):
Town of Breckenridge
Colorado Springs Utilities
Eagle County
Town of Vail
Summit County
Letters of Support
Dear Representative Polis:

The undersigned businesses, organizations, and community leaders support your efforts to protect Colorado’s Central Mountains. From pristine watersheds to world-class hiking and mountain biking, we need to sustain this landscape that is so important to our local economies, the success of our businesses, and the well-being of our employees and communities.

Outdoor recreation in Colorado annually generates $13.2 billion in consumer spending, supports 125,000 jobs, and pays $4.2 billion in direct wages and salaries. In Summit and Eagle Counties, recreation generates $1.5 billion in spending. Your proposal to protect key areas for their stunning scenery, sensitive wildlife, critical watershed values, and many recreational opportunities will promote this vital part of our economy.

As business owners, we recognize that wilderness areas conserve our watersheds, wildlife habitats, and scenic vistas, while offering exceptional hiking, fishing, snowshoeing, climbing, skiing, hunting, and other recreation opportunities. Protecting these natural assets will help Colorado remain a place where people want to live and where businesses thrive.

Conservation efforts in Colorado ensure a long-term sustainable customer base for our state’s economy. We look forward to supporting your efforts to protect Colorado’s Central Mountains.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Meltzer
The Mountain Goat Clothing Company
Breckenridge, CO

Brett Elkman
Vail Valley Anglers
Edwards, CO

Chris Krance
SlopeStyle
Breckenridge, CO

David Minick
Minick Construction
Edwards, CO

Dan Brewster
Haute Route Gear and Apparel
Avon, CO

Marisa A. Selvy
Crazy Mountain Brewery
Edwards, CO

Deborah Wiancek
Riverwalk Natural Health Clinic and Pharmacy
Edwards, CO
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Business/Location</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theresa P.</td>
<td>Art Supply Breck</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ptarmigan Sports</td>
<td>Vail, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debbie King</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bloomingvails, LLC</td>
<td>Vail, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diane Boyer</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skea Ltd.</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronda Niederhauser</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Columbine Bakery</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly Mikita</td>
<td>Vertical Runner</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holly Stein</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flourish</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Dickson</td>
<td>Holly Miller</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big City Blues Clothing</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avon, CO</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stevie Day</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Smok N’ Bra</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ruth Bremer</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa Tousey</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deli Belly’s</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristie Hoffman</td>
<td>Roger Cox</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breckenridge Bead Gallery</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House of Signs, Inc.</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reem F. Badwan</td>
<td>Susan Johnston</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timeless Collections</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frisco Wine Merchant</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Campbell</td>
<td>Lynda Coley</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bella Design and Planning</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moose Jaw Restaurant and Bar</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy Cleary</td>
<td>Yvonne Zook</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B’s Modern Mountain Apothecary</td>
<td>Breckenridge, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anew You</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reem F. Badwan</td>
<td>Susan Minus</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boutique Bling</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summit Travel</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Julie Williams
Gifts at Coopers Corner
Louisville, CO

Nancy Welch
By Chance Shoppe
Louisville, CO

Geoffrey Whitmore
The Walnut Gallery
Louisville, CO

Kara Reese
Ville de Luxe Boutique
Louisville, CO

David Mann
Nina’s Flowers
Louisville, CO

Mary Lynn Gillaspie
Mary Lynn Gillaspie Photography
Louisville, Boulder, CO

John Davis
Frisco Liquors Inc.
Frisco, CO

Charles Hauck
Alpine Accents
Frisco, CO

Diane Bedell
Bedell and Company
Boulder, CO

Brian Harris
Rocky Mountain Anglers
Boulder, CO

Mia Semingson
Two Hands PAPERIE
Boulder, CO

Jacob March
Nomad Bead Merchants
Boulder, CO

Noah Westby
Trident Booksellers and Café
Boulder, CO

Faith Davis
Faith Davis Massage and Yoga
Boulder, CO

Vicki Nichols Goldstein
Colorado Ocean Coalition
Boulder, CO

Stephanie Stoss
Justin’s LLC.
Boulder, CO

Matt Sylvester
SoFlo Glass LLC
Boulder, CO

Nancy Cooley
Found Underground Consignments
Louisville, CO

Ian Jacobson
Eco-Products
Boulder, CO

Barbara Butterworth
The Book Cellar
Louisville, CO

Mike Price
Little Horse Books and Vintage
Louisville, CO

Amy Howard
Gifted Hands Gallery
Louisville, CO

Derek Spois
Spork and Ladle
Boulder, CO

James Clements
Ripstop Repairs
Boulder, CO
Amy Dannwolf
Powder7.com
Golden, CO

Scott Wescott
Wilderness Sports
Dillon, CO

DR Richardson
Vision Ridge Partners
Boulder, CO

Ian Belter
Progess Now
Denver, CO

Louisa Morrissey
High Country Dogs
Silverthorne CO

Gene Karpinski
League of Conservation Voters

Brandon Dwight
Boulder Cycle Sport
Boulder, CO

Rodney Smith
Backpacker’s Pantry
Boulder, CO

Josh Lautenberg
Sonnenalp Real Estate
Vail, CO

Tim West
Breckenridge Outfitters
Breckenridge, CO

Dave Gorsuch
Gorsuch Ltd
Vail, CO

John Bishop
RINO Bike & Snow Repair
Denver, CO

Tom Mullen
West Vail Liquors
Vail, CO

Jackson Streit
Mountain Angler
Breckenridge, CO

Jonathan Staufer
Grappa
Vail, CO

David Stillman
Alpine Mountain Recreation
Breckenridge, CO

John Land Le Coq
Fishpond USA
Silverthorne, CO

Patrick Perry
Vail Valley Anglers
Vail, CO
July 5, 2014
The Honorable Jared Polis
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Polis:

I am writing a strong letter of support for the proposed “Rocky Mountain, Recreation, and Wilderness Preservation Act.” A substantial effort has been put into preparing this proposal. The Act recognizes the extraordinary natural resources available to our citizens in central Colorado. As prepared, the Act will conserve, protect and enhance our beautiful landscapes for current and future generations.

I would especially like to thank you for including the Porcupine Gulch Special Management Area in the Act. This area is close to Arapahoe Basin and has very special natural values. Thank you for closely listening to feedback from stakeholders regarding this area.

Please let me know if I can provide you with any other additional information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Alan Henceroth
Vice President / Chief Operating Office
Arapahoe Basin
(970) 513-5722
alanht@a-basin.net
August 21, 2014

Rep. Jared Polis
P.O. Box 1453
Frisco, CO 80443

Conservation Colorado
1536 Wynkoop Street, #5C
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Rep. Polis:

The Town of Breckenridge would like to state our endorsement of the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act recently proposed by your office.

As a land protection tool, federal wilderness is important because it protects important ecosystem values, scenic landscapes, and recreational opportunities in perpetuity. Our community believes that additional wilderness designations in Summit County will augment existing land protection efforts while also supporting the local outdoor recreation economy.

Of particular interest to the Town of Breckenridge are the proposed Hoosier Ridge and Tenmile Wilderness Areas and the associated Tenmile Recreation Management Areas. We believe the landscape, ecosystem, and recreational values of these areas warrant additional land protection in the form of wilderness.

Your staff has worked judiciously with area stakeholders to amend the previously proposed wilderness boundaries to address recreational access, watershed protection, and forest health concerns expressed by Breckenridge citizens. The amended maps and language associated with the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act are consistent with the White River National Forest Travel Management Plan and allow for critically important access to prevent, prepare for, and respond to wildfire concerns. We appreciate your diligence in addressing these important community issues.

Thank you to you and your staff for your efforts in preserving Colorado’s treasured landscapes.

Sincerely,

John Warner, Mayor

CC: U.S. Sen. Mark Udall
    U.S. Sen. Michael Bennett
September 8, 2014

Honorable Jared Polis  
United States House of Representatives  
1433 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of support concerning the designation of the Tenmile and Hoosier Ridge Wilderness and Special Management Areas of the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act

Dear Representative Polis,

Thank you for introducing HR 5311, the “Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act.” Colorado Springs Utilities is committed to preserving wilderness values in order to meet the current and future water needs of our community and we feel that the introduced version of HR 5311 stands in support of these values.

While both the Tenmile and Hoosier Ridge proposals had the potential to disrupt critical elements of Utilities’ existing and future water supply developments in the Blue River Watershed, I very much appreciate the collaborative spirit between your staff, the Wilderness Society, Conservation Colorado, and our staff here from Utilities to find a reasonable solution of compromise that upholds the best interest of all parties.

Utilities’ continues to work with other entities from Colorado’s Eastern and Western Slopes on a cooperative, joint use project in the Eagle River Basin as a signatory to the Eagle River Memorandum of Understanding (ERMOU). As we continue to work with our partners to explore project development alternatives, it is critical that future wilderness proposals provide for the ability of water providers to develop their conditional water rights in the Eagle River Basin and construct projects that are essential to meet future water supply needs in a manner that is both cost effective and protective of environmental values. As a partner of the ERMOU, Utilities’ support of future wilderness proposals will require accommodations for the development of conditional rights and necessary infrastructure in the Upper Eagle River Basin, including the Homestake Creek Valley, as we have discussed previously.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you and your staff on resource management issues, including current and future wilderness proposals. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, or require additional information from Utilities.

Sincerely,

Gary Bogstrom, P.E.  
Chief Water Services Officer  
Colorado Springs Utilities
July 14, 2014

The Honorable Jared Polis
501 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Polis:

We are writing to express our support for the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act recently proposed by your office. As you are aware, Eagle County played an active role in analyzing and vetting the original wilderness expansion effort, then known as the Hidden Gems Wilderness Project, which included the Freeman Creek, Spraddle Creek and No Name wilderness additions. We believe these areas continue to qualify for wilderness protection status, and we are pleased to see that they have been included in your proposed legislation.

Wilderness lands reflect the history and heritage of Colorado’s scenic high country. In Eagle County, their presence and availability is essential to local lifestyles, the quality of our environment and the strength of our tourism economy. While a balanced approach to land management that considers the needs of all user groups is necessary, we believe that expending wilderness to carefully selected land areas will provide long lasting benefits. We would note certain lower elevation lands that were included in the original Hidden Gems proposal are not currently being considered, and would offer our support in efforts to get these valuable ecosystem linkage areas designated for protection in the near future.

Many thanks to you and your staff for your continued efforts to preserve beautiful places in Colorado.

Sincerely,

Eagle County Board of Commissioners

Jill H. Ryan  Sara J. Fisher  Kathy Chandler-Henry
Chairman  Commissioner  Commissioner

Cc: Senator Mark Udall  Congressman Scott Tipton

Eagle County Building, 500 Broadway, P.O. Box 850, Eagle, Colorado 81631-0850
July 29, 2014

The Honorable Jared Polis
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Special Management Areas

Dear Representative Polis,

Our organizations work on public land issues focusing on the outdoor recreation economy. First and foremost, we want to thank you for your work on the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act. We know you and your staff are committed to this legislation, and many other outdoor recreation initiatives, and we applaud these efforts.

The recreation economy of the 21st century continues to grow and provide sustainable jobs in rural and urban gateway communities across the country. Our organizations, and the individuals we represent, have been working to complement the efforts of the conservation groups on public lands bills around the country. Traditional public lands bills focus on Wilderness designation, which is critical for protecting our wild lands.

However, with the expansion and diversity of the recreation economy, other protections are often just as important to the growth and success of the outdoor industry. Recreation Management Areas provide protection for key recreation assets that are often closer to gateway towns and provide convenient front country outdoor opportunities. They also provide certainty for local businesses that are confident that continued investment in these communities will be beneficial. There are currently a number of public land bills and proposals that include these types of designations, such as Mr. Bishop’s public lands initiative for Eastern Utah, the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act and Forest Jobs and Recreation Act in Montana, the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act in Colorado, and the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act California. The inclusion of the Recreation Management Areas allows us to build broad support for these bills:

- on both sides of the aisle
- with user groups of all types
- with outdoor businesses, both locally and nationally
- with gateway business such as restaurants and hotels
- and with conservation groups

Few places are more iconic and important to the outdoor industry than those in your district. Wilderness alone will not fully protect the recreation economy of central Colorado. For this reason we thank you for including the Tennille Recreation Management Area in your bill. Ensuring the inclusion of the RMA in the introduction of the bill will help generate broad and diverse support from the mountain bike and recreation community and set a precedent that small protections and investments in the outdoor recreation economy will reap many benefits.
Most sincerely,

Jenn Dice  
People for Bikes

Ashley Korenblat
Public Land Solutions

Aaron Clark
International Mountain Bicycling Association

Kirk Bailey
Outdoor Industry Association
November 11, 2014

United States Representative Jared Polis
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 5311 Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act

Congressman Polis -

Vail Resorts, Breckenridge Ski Resort, Keystone, Vail Mountain, and Beaver Creek thank you for your work on the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act. We support this effort to recognize these important areas in Eagle and Summit County.

We believe the special nature of Colorado’s resort communities and their economies relies on the successful balance of thoughtfully developed recreation opportunities on our public lands with the conservation of areas possessing important ecological and recreational values. The areas under consideration for designation contribute to the quality of life in our iconic mountain communities and merit enhanced management protections.

This legislation represents a locally driven, collaborative, and balanced approach to designate additional wilderness and special management areas in Eagle and Summit counties. In that spirit, our support aligns with our local governments of Eagle and Summit County as well as the Town of Breckenridge and the Town of Vail. In addition to local government support we believe that the support of the United States Forest Service is critical to this effort and urge continued work with the agency through the legislative process to address any issues or opportunities related to the future management of these lands as contemplated in H.R. 5311.

Respectfully,

Beth Ganz
VP of Public Affairs & Sustainability
Vail Resorts Management Company

Rick Cables
VP of Natural Resources & Conservation
Vail Resorts Management Company
August 26, 2014

The Honorable Jared Polis
U.S. House of Representatives
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Polis:

Thank you for including Xcel Energy during your extensive stakeholder outreach process while drafting the "Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act."

As Congress considers wilderness and other important legislation, we are appreciative of your continued willingness to reach out to local communities to gather input. As you know, electric and gas service is crucial to the health and well-being of communities in Colorado. Access to this infrastructure is necessary to continue providing reliable service.

We appreciate your willingness to find a balance between protecting Colorado's natural treasures and the need to provide safe, affordable, reliable energy.

You and your staff have been very gracious by meeting with us, facilitating conversations with the U.S. Forest Service, and considering our comments on the legislation.

Once again, thank you for including Xcel Energy in your stakeholder engagement process. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Plevniak
Manager, Federal Government Affairs
Select Media Clips, Editorials and Op Eds
New push for Colorado wilderness expansion

Posted on May 22, 2015 by Bob Berwyn

New wilderness is in the works for Eagle and Summit counties, in the mountains of Colorado.

**Congress Jared Polis introduces land protection measure**

FRISCO — A proposal for new Colorado wilderness areas is back on the political table in Washington, where Congressman Jared Polis introduced a new bill that, if passed, would add more than 39,000 acres of land to the wilderness roster.

“The areas that stretch along the Continental Divide in Summit and Eagle counties are the iconic playground of our state,” Polis said. “They are where Coloradans and out-of-state tourists alike go to ski, hike, mountain bike, hunt, and fish ... and this bill will ensure they are preserved for future generations to enjoy,” he added.

According to Polis, the the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act will help sustain recreational resources, protect watersheds, preserve important wildfire corridors, and strengthen Colorado’s tourism economy.

Along with new wilderness, the bill would also designate 16,000 acres as special management areas for recreation, and where some other activities, including wildfire mitigation and forest health treatments would be permitted.

The legislation is a new iteration of previous measures going back many years to the original Hidden Gems campaign, a grassroots effort to identify potential wilderness.

“Coloradans love their public lands, and the Continental Divide Act would permanently protect some of our most superb wildlands that are critical to wildlife, recreation and forming our state’s scenic backdrop,” said Conservation Colorado director Pete Maysmith.
“Congressman Polis’ bill represents a welcomed evolution of land protection using a variety of tools to maximize protection while retaining quality trail access,” said Jason Bertolacci, regional director of the International Mountain Biking Association, which lobbied to keep some areas open for cycling.

The measure also got support from Colorado Springs, which operates water diversions in the area covered by the Polis bill.

Colorado Springs Utilities very much appreciates the collaborative spirit between Congressman Polis, the Wilderness Society, Conservation Colorado, and our staff here from Utilities in finding a reasonable solution of compromise in this legislation,” said Gary Bostrom, Colorado Springs Utilities chief water services officer.

Specifically, the proposal would create new wilderness areas in the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range, and Hoosier Ridge, as well as expand the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

The plan also would enhance outdoor recreation opportunities such as fishing, hunting, biking, and backcountry snow sports by creating an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area along the Tenmile Range.

The proposal was drafted through an open, collaborative process with local stakeholders that not only maintained existing recreational uses, but also incorporated community values by accounting for future improvements.

Earlier this month Polis held a naming contest for the bill. The winning submission was suggested by Bob Waters, of Boulder.

Also earlier this month, Polis hosted the top Democrat on the Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Raul Grijalva, so he could tour the proposed protection areas first-hand and hear from local leaders about the importance of the bill. During that meeting, Grijalva called the bill “a precedent-setter.”

“The broad local support and buy-in behind this bill is incredibly impressive. We’re going to make this a priority,” Grijalva said.

With his new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee and Grijalva’s engagement on the issue, Polis is optimistic about moving the bill through Congress this session. The recent successes in protecting Hermosa Creek and Browns Canyon demonstrate Colorado’s commitment to preserving its open spaces and this bill’s passage would be a logical next step in that chain of events.
THE DENVER POST

Full breakdown of proposal area:

Wilderness:

- Acorn Creek, 1,139 acres (Summit County)
- Hoosier Ridge, 5,182 acres (Summit County)
- Ptarmigan Additions, 2,266 acres (Summit County)
- Tenmile, 7,577 acres (Summit County)
- Ute Pass, 2,944 acres (Summit County)
- Williams Fork, 9,338 acres (Summit County)
- Freeman Creek, 1,175 acres (Eagle County)
- Spraddle Creek, 5,907 acres (Eagle County)
- No Name, 3,942 acres (Eagle County)

TOTAL: 39,470 acres

Special Management Area:

- Tenmile North, 6,991 acres (Recreation area, Summit)
- Tenmile South, 4,426 acres (Recreation area, Summit)
- Porcupine Gulch, 5,204 acres (Summit)

TOTAL: 16,621 acres

Potential Wilderness Addition:

- Spraddle Creek Potential, 2,338 acres (Eagle)

TOTAL: 2,338 acres

The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act is endorsed by the following groups, organizations, and businesses:

More than 39,000 acres in the Colorado mountains around resorts would be protected as wilderness under legislation that U.S. Rep. Jared Polis is poised to introduce in Congress.

An additional 18,000 acres would gain lesser protection — allowing mountain bikes, for example, at an 11,500-acre Tenmile area north of Quandary Peak — under his Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act.

Polis, a Boulder Democrat, has been working for years to protect the land, mostly around edges of existing wilderness areas near Dillon, Vail and Breckenridge.
"The threats are political. Every administration can reclassify lands however they want. We want to make sure these are permanently preserved against future development," Polis said in an interview.

The new wilderness, if approved, would expand the 3.6 million acres of existing wilderness around Colorado that currently total 6 percent of the state's land. Those areas include land near Aspen, Indian Peaks on the Front Range, the Sangre de Cristo and Weminuche areas in southern Colorado, and the Flat Tops north of Interstate 70.

A federal wilderness designation prohibits mechanized vehicles and development.

Summit and Eagle county officials, Conservation Colorado, the Wilderness Society and the International Mountain Bike Association are among the groups supporting this proposal.

Only Congress can declare wilderness. Under the Wilderness Act of 1964, 110 million acres of forests and other public lands in 44 states have gained protection.

Polis introduced a bill in 2010 and 2011 then redesigned it. Staffers said they're optimistic. He sits on the House Natural Resources Committee, which handles wilderness legislation, and recently took Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz., the top Democrat on the committee, on a tour. Polis said he has received assurances that his bill will be a priority.

"Losing this area to private developers, whether mining or for buildings," he said, "would jeopardize our watersheds and hurt our tourist economy."
Sen. Bennet visits Breckenridge in support of Continental Divide conservation legislation

Alli Langley  alangley@summitdaily.com  August 21, 2015

U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet visited Breckenridge on Wednesday, Aug. 19, to learn more about a conservation effort that would create more federally designated wilderness and other conservation areas around the Continental Divide.

Hunters, anglers, outdoor recreationists, small business owners, elected officials, veterans and conservationists met with the senator at Breckenridge Ski Resort to show their support for a Senate companion of the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Jared Polis in the House.

The legislation would safeguard roughly 58,000 acres of land through wilderness and other management designations in Eagle and Summit counties. The areas serve as popular destinations for sportsmen and other outdoor recreationists and provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife and sources of clean water.

The proposal would add new areas to the Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak and Holy Cross wilderness areas as well as establish three new wilderness areas — Hoosier Ridge, Tenmile, and Williams Fork — in addition to the Porcupine Gulch Protection Area and Tenmile Recreation Management Area.

After hearing from about a dozen representatives of various groups involved in creating the legislation, including local mountain bikers, Bennet announced at the gathering that he would introduce a companion bill in the Senate and work with Polis to pass the legislation.

To learn more about the Continental Divide coalition, visit: http://continentaldivide.org.
Breckenridge demonstration supports Clean Power Plan, climate action

Two weeks after President Obama announced historic limits on global warming pollution from power plants, a Colorado environmental organization held a demonstration in Breckenridge to show support for the Clean Power Plan and push for climate action.

Organizers gathered near the Riverwalk lawn on Thursday, Aug. 20, gave out popsicles and encouraged passersby to take photos with signs pledging they would take action on climate change.

The new rule from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, known as the Clean Power Plan, will cut carbon pollution from Colorado power plants 32 percent by 2030 while developing a framework for building a stronger clean energy economy that focuses on solar, wind and energy efficiency.

More than 200,000 Coloradans, along with public health experts, outdoor recreational groups and businesses, submitted comments in support of cutting this carbon pollution.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment executive director Dr. Larry Wolk said, “The EPA listened to Colorado and other states and stakeholders in making needed revisions, providing important flexibility to the states to craft specific strategies to reduce CO2 emissions and the time needed to accomplish the goals.”

Participants at the event called on Colorado’s U.S. Senators Bennet and Gardner to publicly support the final rule.
Bennet to introduce Senate version of Polis wilderness bill

8/21/2015

By David O. Williams

U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet on Wednesday announced he’ll introduce a bill this session to protect more than 58,000 acres of public land in Eagle and Summit counties as wilderness.

Bennet made the announcement at a press event in Breckenridge attended by local politicians, area residents and business leaders. The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act will be the Senate version of bill introduced earlier this in the House by Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder.

Polis, a member of the House Natural Resources Committee, has been working on the bill since late last decade, paring it down from the original and highly controversial 342,000-acre Hidden Gems proposal.

After dozens of town halls and other public meetings over the years, Polis in 2010 scaled back the proposal to just Eagle and Summit counties (eliminating any land in Pitkin and Gunnison counties) and introduced a bill that would still have put the more restrictive wilderness designation on nearly 166,000 acres.

Now it’s down to just over 58,000 acres, including an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area within the Tenmile Range in Summit County. It has the backing of groups such as the Wilderness Society, Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Conservation Colorado and many towns, businesses and water districts.

“Communities throughout Eagle and Summit counties have been working on a proposal to protect this land for years now,” Bennet said in a release. “Today’s meeting demonstrated that there is significant support to move forward with a bill in the Senate. With the help of Rep. Polis, we will draft a bill that works for the local communities and introduce it in the Senate.”
COLORADO STATESMAN

Vail Resorts, the largest employer in the two counties and on the entire Western Slope, backed the Polis bill earlier this year.

“It is interesting to note that 20 percent of all recreation visits to our national forests take place at a ski area, yet ski areas occupy less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all public Forest Service lands,” said Kristi Kenney Williams, the company’s vice president of mountain community affairs.

Wilderness designation does not allow for alpine skiing using mechanized lifts or vehicles. However, Kenney Williams noted that tourism is the state’s second-largest industry and that wilderness areas are vital for non-mechanized recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking and Nordic skiing — all of which are big economic drivers for local communities.

“So we are proud to support this effort that strikes this unique and important balance of being able to offer thoughtfully developed recreation opportunities at our ski areas and the conservation of wilderness,” she added.

Mountain biking is not permitted in most wilderness areas, but the special Tenmile Recreation Management Area would protect a huge swatch of public land for off-road cycling.

“This proposal has gained widespread support because it was shaped by multiple user groups,” said Jamie Malin, president of the Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association. “It preserves access and keeps critical corridors open to traditional users.”

Malin joined Breckenridge Mayor John Warner in praising the process that Polis used to get to this point.

“Protecting our mountains and our backyard is essential to Breckenridge’s appeal to tourists, our residents and our economy,” Warner said. “We hope [Bennet] and Rep. Polis will work hard to make this proposal a reality in the current Congress, knowing they have community support behind them.”

Bennet, a Democrat, told the gathering on Wednesday that wilderness designation should not be a partisan issue and was confident he’d be able to get bipartisan support for his bill in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Polis did not attend Wednesday’s event but was in Breckenridge recently to tout the proposal, most of which falls in his sprawling 2nd Congressional District. Polis earlier this month toured the Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center and held town hall meetings in Eagle and Summit counties.

In other wilderness news, Denver Democrat Diana DeGette once again introduced her Colorado Wilderness Act in the House earlier this month. She has been trying to pass a version of this far more sweeping legislation since 1999, and the latest proposal would protect 32 separate areas consisting of more than 715,000 acres.
Polis tours Summit County with Arizona congressman to raise support for wilderness bill

Alli Langley alangley@summitdaily.com May 8, 2015

U.S. Reps. Jared Polis (CO-02) and Raul Grijalva (AZ-03), the top Democrat on the House Natural Resource Committee, toured Summit County Thursday, May 7, to look at proposed wilderness and special management areas in the White River National Forest.

Driving west, they stopped at Loveland Pass, Sapphire Point and Officers Gulch, and Conservation Colorado wilderness advocate Scott Braden showed Grijalva which mountains and forests he saw would be included in the bill Polis will reintroduce later this month.

The representatives also participated in a lunchtime roundtable discussion in Vail with about 30 local elected officials, large and small business owners, water suppliers and wilderness advocates who worked with Polis to craft the bill, so Grijalva could hear from locals about why they support the wilderness protections in Polis’ bill.

“Our bill would ensure that our public lands, which drive this economy, are preserved and protected for generations to enjoy,” Polis said. “We’re thrilled Rep. Grijalva got to see these areas first-hand and hear directly from those impacted.”

The roundtable included Summit County Commissioner Karn Stiegelmeier, Summit Huts Association director Mike Zobbe, Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center director Bruce Fitch, Silverthorne area resident and nature photographer John Fielder, Vail Resorts vice president of natural resources and conservation Rick Cables, longtime High Country resident and business owner Dave Gorsuch.

Several people expressed concerns about energy development, and some suggested Polis convince those opposed to the bill that wilderness is the energy source for the High Country.
Garett Reppenhagen, a Park County resident and the Rocky Mountain director of the Vet Voice Foundation, spoke about what wilderness meant to him after his military service.

“When I came home that’s where I went. I went out into the wilderness, and that’s where I found healing,” he said. “If we don’t have those for our kids and future generations then what the hell did I fight for?”

Grijalva, whose influence on the Natural Resources Committee could help move the bill to a House vote, said he was impressed by the bill’s broad local support.

“We’re going to make this a priority. It’s a well-done piece of legislation, and I was glad to see it first-hand,” Grijalva said. “This is a precedence setter.”

The bill would protect 58,000 acres of wilderness lands in Summit County and eastern Eagle County and create new wilderness areas in the Tenmile Range, Hoosier Ridge and Williams Fork Mountains as well as expand the existing Eagles Nest, Ptarmigan Peak and Holy Cross wilderness areas.

The plan also would create an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area in the Tenmile Range near Frisco and Breckenridge that would be managed like a wilderness areas but would allow mountain biking.

The proposal was drafted in partnership with local stakeholders so that it maintains existing recreational uses and accounts for future improvements local communities valued. With his new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee and Grijalva’s engagement, Polis said he is optimistic about moving the bill through Congress this session.

For more information about the bill, which Polis is working to retitle through a naming contest, visit polis.house.gov/wilderness.
Veterans and their families are invited to explore the newly proposed Continental Divide Wilderness Area with Garett Reppenhagen of the Vet Voice Foundation.

The group will meet atop Hoosier Pass at 9 a.m. on Saturday, July 25, for a moderate, 5-mile loop hike starting just below treeline and rising to about 13,000 feet.

The ridgeline hike will offer participants views of areas proposed for federal wilderness protection by U.S. Rep. Jared Polis. Polis’ mountain representative Nissa Erickson will join to help hikers learn more about the conservation effort.

Participants will meet by the Continental Divide sign at the Hoosier Pass parking lot 11 miles south of Breckenridge on Highway 9. They should bring water, lunch/snacks and sunscreen and be prepared for potentially cold and wet weather. Children who are capable hikers are welcome, but dogs should be left at home.

RSVP to Garett Reppenhagen, U.S. Army 1st Infantry Division OIF veteran and Vet Voice Foundation Rocky Mountain West coordinator, at 719-235-7030, or REPP@vetvoicefoundation.org.
Those who live here know that the sunrise from atop Quandary Peak, the alpenglow of the Gore Range and mountain valleys flush with Columbine are at the core of Colorado’s character. Coloradans and tourists alike flock to our mountains and open spaces to ski, hike, mountain bike, hunt and fish, among many other activities. In the process, they add billions to our state economy each year. It’s important that we sustain this natural resource and economic driver.

Generations of Coloradans have understood this. Beginning with the Wilderness Act in 1965 to the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993, and most recently, the hard fought victory to designate Browns Canyon as a national monument and to protect the Hermosa Creek Watershed, Coloradans have united behind preserving our state’s iconic beauty, wildlife and recreational resources.

We’re continuing that legacy today. Earlier this year, I introduced a bill that designates 40,000 acres of pristine peaks and surrounding valleys as wilderness, and another 18,000 for management as recreational zones. These areas that stretch along the Continental Divide in Summit and Eagle counties are the iconic playground of our state. This Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act — named by a constituent in our first-ever Name Your Own Bill contest — would make certain that we are protecting the breathtaking spaces that add billions to our state and local economies each year and help form the core of our Colorado identity.

Specifically, the proposal would ensure access and enhance opportunities to the world-class hunting, fishing and backcountry snow sports Colorado is famous for by creating new wilderness areas within the White River National Forest, such as the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range and Hoosier Ridge, and by expanding the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak wilderness areas. The plan would also protect and expand access to bike trails by designating nearly 18,000 acres across Tenmile and Porcupine Gulch as Special Management Zones.

To put this into perspective, the White River National Forest — one of the most popular national forests in the country — attracts millions of visitors per year. This is the lifeblood of our economy. From equipment rentals to resort staff, tourism and outdoor recreation generates over $13 billion in consumer spending and creates over 125,000 jobs statewide. In 2013 alone, Colorado received $994 million just from the state and local taxes on outdoor recreation spending.

Equally important are the wildlife, watersheds and unique ecosystems this legislation would protect. These lands are home to a wide range of protected species and house some of our most treasured resources.
Carefully crafted over six years with input from dozens of stakeholder groups — including Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Colorado Springs Utilities, the Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Fishermen, Conservation Colorado and affected municipalities, small businesses and utility providers — the Continental Divide bill reflects the same spirit of grassroots collaboration that helped Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek finally achieve federal protections last year. It’s a bill everyone can get behind.

Getting Congress to act on Colorado’s commitment to protect its public lands is the hard part. But the victories in Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek are evidence that patience and persistence pay off.

That’s why last month, I invited Rep. Raul Grijalva, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, to tour these iconic landscapes first-hand and hear from locals about the importance of protecting these proposed wilderness and recreation areas. The area’s beauty combined with the overwhelming local support for the bill made a lasting impression on my colleague, who indicated his commitment to making this project a priority.

With Grijalva’s support and my new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee, I’m optimistic that we can move this bill forward this Congress. The varied and vocal support for this bill reflects Colorado’s commitment to preserving its open spaces; passing this bill and protecting Colorado’s Continental Divide is the next step.

*U.S. Rep. Jared Polis represents Congressional District 2, which includes the eastern part of Eagle County.*
Those who live here know that the sunrise from atop Quandary Peak, the alpenglow of the Gore Range, and mountain valleys flush with columbine are at the core of Colorado’s character.

Coloradans and tourists alike flock to our mountains and open spaces to ski, hike, mountain bike, hunt, and fish, among many other activities. In the process, they add billions to our state economy each year. It’s important that we sustain this natural resource and economic driver.

Generations of Coloradans have understood this. Beginning with the Wilderness Act in 1965 to the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993, and most recently, the hard fought victory to designate Browns Canyon as a national monument and to protect the Hermosa Creek Watershed, Coloradans have united behind preserving our state’s iconic beauty, wildlife, and recreational resources.

We’re continuing that legacy today. Earlier this year, I introduced a bill that designates 40,000 acres of pristine peaks and surrounding valleys as Wilderness, and another 18,000 for management as recreational zones. These areas that stretch along the Continental Divide in Summit and Eagle counties are the iconic playground of our state. This Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act — named by a constituent in our first-ever “Name Your Own Bill” contest — would make certain that we are protecting the breathtaking spaces that add billions to our state and local economies each year and help form the core of our Colorado identity.

Specifically, the proposal would ensure access and enhance opportunities to the world-class hunting, fishing, and backcountry snow sports Colorado is famous for by creating new wilderness areas within the White River National Forest, such as the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range, and Hoosier Ridge, and by expanding the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas. The plan would also protect and expand access to bike trails by designating nearly 18,000 acres across Tenmile and Porcupine Gulch as Special Management Zones.

To put this into perspective, the White River National Forest – one of the most popular national forests in the country – attracts millions of visitors per year. This is the lifeblood of our economy. From equipment rentals to resort staff, tourism and outdoor recreation generates over $13 billion in consumer spending and creates over 125,000 jobs statewide. In 2013 alone, Colorado received $994 million just from the state and local taxes on outdoor recreation spending.

Equally important are the wildlife, watersheds, and unique ecosystems this legislation would protect. These lands are home to a wide range of protected species and house some of our most treasured resources.
Carefully crafted over six years with input from dozens of stakeholder groups — including Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Colorado Springs Utilities, the Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Fishermen, Conservation Colorado, and affected municipalities, small businesses, and utility providers — the Continental Divide bill reflects the same spirit of grassroots collaboration that helped Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek finally achieve federal protections last year. It’s a bill everyone can get behind.

Getting Congress to act on Colorado’s commitment to protect its public lands is the hard part. But the victories in Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek are evidence that patience and persistence pay off.

That’s why last month, I invited Rep. Raul Grijalva, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, to tour these iconic landscapes first-hand and hear from locals about the importance of protecting these proposed wilderness and recreation areas. The area’s beauty combined with the overwhelming local support for the bill made a lasting impression on my colleague, who indicated his commitment to making this project a priority.

With Grijalva’s support and my new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee, I’m optimistic that we can move this bill forward this Congress. The varied and vocal support for this bill reflects Colorado’s commitment to preserving its open spaces; passing this bill and protecting Colorado’s Continental Divide is the next step.

Polis: Continuing Colorado’s legacy of conservation

http://www.coloradostatesman.com/content/995801-polis-continuing-colorado%3Fs-legacy-conservation

6/19/2015

By Rep. Jared Polis, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Those who live here know that the sunrise from atop Quandary Peak, the alpenglow of the Gore Range, and mountain valleys flush with Columbine are at the core of Colorado’s character. Coloradans and tourists alike flock to our mountains and open spaces to ski, hike, mountain bike, hunt, and fish, among many other activities. In the process, they add billions to our state economy each year. It’s important that we sustain this natural resource and economic driver.

Generations of Coloradans have understood this. Beginning with the Wilderness Act in 1965 to the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993, and most recently, the hard fought victory to designate Browns Canyon as a national monument and to protect the Hermosa Creek Watershed, Coloradans have united behind preserving our state’s iconic beauty, wildlife, and recreational resources.

We’re continuing that legacy today. Earlier this year, I introduced a bill that designates 40,000 acres of pristine peaks and surrounding valleys as Wilderness, and another 18,000 for management as recreational zones. These areas that stretch along the Continental Divide in Summit and Eagle counties are the iconic playground of our state. This Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act — named by a constituent in our first-ever “Name Your Own Bill” contest — would make certain that we are protecting the breathtaking spaces that that add billions to our state and local economies each year and help form the core of our Colorado identity.

Specifically, the proposal would ensure access and enhance opportunities to the world-class hunting, fishing, and backcountry snow sports Colorado is famous for by creating new wilderness areas within the White River National Forest, such as the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range, and Hoosier Ridge, and by expanding the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas. The plan would also protect and expand access to bike trails by designating nearly 18,000 acres across Tenmile and Porcupine Gulch as Special Management Zones.
The Colorado Statesman

To put this into perspective, the White River National Forest — one of the most popular national forests in the country — attracts millions of visitors per year. This is the lifeblood of our economy. From equipment rentals to resort staff, tourism and outdoor recreation generates over $13 billion in consumer spending and creates over 125,000 jobs statewide. In 2013 alone, Colorado received $994 million just from the state and local taxes on outdoor recreation spending.

Equally important are the wildlife, watersheds, and unique ecosystems this legislation would protect. These lands are home to a wide range of protected species and house some of our most treasured resources.

Carefully crafted over six years with input from dozens of stakeholder groups — including Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Colorado Springs Utilities, the Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Fishermen, Conservation Colorado, and affected municipalities, small businesses, and utility providers — the Continental Divide bill reflects the same spirit of grassroots collaboration that helped Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek finally achieve federal protections last year. It’s a bill everyone can get behind.

Getting Congress to act on Colorado’s commitment to protect its public lands is the hard part. But the victories in Browns Canyon and Hermosa Creek are evidence that patience and persistence pay off.

That’s why last month, I invited Rep. Raul Grijalva, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, to tour these iconic landscapes first-hand and hear from locals about the importance of protecting these proposed wilderness and recreation areas. The area’s beauty combined with the overwhelming local support for the bill made a lasting impression on my colleague, who indicated his commitment to making this project a priority.

With Grijalva’s support and my new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee, I’m optimistic that we can move this bill forward this Congress. The varied and vocal support for this bill reflects Colorado’s commitment to preserving its open spaces; passing this bill and protecting Colorado’s Continental Divide is the next step.

Rep. Jared Polis, a Democrat, represents Colorado’s 2nd Congressional District. He lives in Boulder.
FIGHTING FOR OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

Garrett Reppenhagen – Valley Voices – Opinion Column

May 28, 2015

You could say that serving my country is in my blood. As a third generation veteran, I always knew that I would follow in the footsteps of my father and grandfather. You could also say that speaking out for the causes I believe in is also in my blood. Because with military service comes a deep love and respect for our country, and all that makes her great.

A big part of what makes America so special is our public lands. They are our natural heritage — an iconic patchwork of beauty dotting the country from coast to coast. They are lands that serve as home for wildlife, a recreation haven and an economic powerhouse. Our lands and waters are also a place where veterans can go to find strength and healing after coming home from tours overseas.

Recently, Rep. Jared Polis introduced legislation to safeguard roughly 58,000 acres of public land in Eagle and Summit counties. The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act came after years of hard work and cooperation from different stakeholders including mountain bikers and snowmobilers, hunters and anglers, local elected officials and small business owners, and veterans like me.

The legislation will protect key watersheds which provide drinking water for local communities along the Front Range. It will also safeguard local streams and blue-ribbon trout fishing opportunities. And it will preserve healthy wildlife habitat by limiting road building, new mines and other development that would degrade watershed values. Speaking of wildlife, these areas are home to black bear, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, moose, lynx and wild turkey.

People come to the central Rocky Mountains to hike, camp, ski, kayak, raft, hunt, fish, mountain bike, horseback ride, ATV and snowmobile. Those adventures translate into big business for the outdoor recreation and tourism industries and the hotels, restaurants and grocery stores that support the visitors. Across Colorado, these activities generate $13.2 billion in consumer spending and are responsible for 125,000 jobs that pay $4.2 billion in salaries and wages.

It seems like everyone has their reasons for wanting to safeguard these natural treasures for future generations. For me, it is because that is where veterans like me go to be with family and friends and heal from the traumas of war. These are the places where we reconnect with our loved ones and learn how to be civilians again. It is where we go to be with other veterans to share our experiences and leave them behind.
A 2013 poll by Vet Voice Foundation found that over 70 percent of Colorado veterans support protecting public lands like the ones in Eagle and Summit counties so future generations can enjoy all that these lands have to offer.

I want to thank Rep. Polis for his leadership on protecting public lands and introducing the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act, and I hope Congress listens to our voices and moves this legislation forward. Fighting for our country does not always end when we come home. For me it means now fighting for our shared natural heritage.

Garett Reppenhagen is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He lives in Denver.
WASHINGTON, D.C. — Representative Jared Polis, a Boulder Democrat whose district includes the eastern third of Eagle County, has introduced a bill to preserve 58,000 acres of wilderness and recreation lands in Summit and eastern Eagle counties.

Crafted with input from groups including The Wilderness Society, Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Conservation Colorado and affected municipalities and businesses, the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act will help sustain recreational resources, protect watersheds, preserve important wildfire corridors and strengthen Colorado’s tourism economy.

‘PRESERVED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS’

“The areas that stretch along the Continental Divide in Summit and Eagle counties are the iconic playground of our state,” Polis said. “They are where Coloradans and out-of-state tourists alike go to ski, hike, mountain bike, hunt and fish, among many other activities, and this bill will ensure they are preserved for future generations to enjoy.”

Specifically, the proposal would create new wilderness areas in the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range and Hoosier Ridge, as well as expand the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak wilderness areas.

The plan also would enhance outdoor recreation opportunities including fishing, hunting, biking and backcountry snow sports by creating an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area within the Tenmile Range. The proposal was drafted through a collaborative process with local stakeholders that not only maintained existing recreational uses, but also incorporated community values by accounting for future improvements.

Also earlier this month, Polis hosted the top Democrat on the Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Raul Grijalva of Arizona, so he could tour the proposed protection areas first-hand and hear from local leaders about the importance of the bill. During that meeting, Grijalva called the bill a precedent-setter, saying, “The broad local support and buy-in behind this bill is incredibly impressive. We’re going to make this a priority.”

With his new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee and Grijalva’s engagement on the issue, Polis is optimistic about moving the bill through Congress this session. A map of the proposal is available on Polis’ website at www.polis.house.gov.
Breckenridge, CO (May 21, 2015) – A coalition of outdoor recreationists, sportsmen, small business owners, local elected officials, and conservationists today applauded a bill to protect Colorado’s central Rocky Mountains. Congressman Jared Polis’ introduction of the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act would safeguard roughly 60,000 acres of land through wilderness and other designations in Eagle and Summit counties. The areas serve as popular recreation destinations, critical habitat for wildlife, and sources of clean water.

The name Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act was chosen during a two-week long contest, in which roughly 200 Coloradans suggested titles that would honor this recreation and wildlife haven to the west of Denver. The contest reflected the “for Coloradans by Coloradans” nature of the proposal.

“For years, people have been coming together to safeguard this portion of the Rocky Mountains—the backbone of our local economy,” said Dan Gibbs, a Summit County Commissioner. “In addition to our thriving outdoor recreation and tourism economy, people choose to live here because of our incredible backyard.”

Over the past five years, local community members have been working to protect this area of Colorado’s Continental Divide. The legislation would add new areas to the Ptarmigan Peak, Holy Cross, and Eagles Nest wilderness areas as well as establish three new wilderness areas: Hoosier Ridge, Tenmile, and Williams Fork in addition to the Porcupine Gulch Protection Area.

The legislation also includes the Tenmile Recreation Management Area, which would protect important lands and trails for mountain biking and other recreation uses. “Like hikers, skiers, hunters and anglers, mountain bikers have come to love and respect these lands through exploration and adventure. We
IMBA

recognize the need to protect both the ecological resources of the land and the dependent local recreation economies. Congressman Polis' bill represents a welcomed evolution of land protection using a variety of tools to maximize protection while retaining quality trail access,“ said Jason Bertolacci, International Mountain Bicycling Association's Colorado/Wyoming Regional Director.

Preserving Colorado’s Continental Divide will safeguard sportsmen’s time-tested backcountry traditions, and secure access for world-class hunting and fishing. The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act would protect ecologically important mid-elevation areas that provide vital wildlife habitat to black bear, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, moose, lynx, and wild turkey.

Garett Reppenhagen, a U.S. Army Kosovo and Iraq War veteran said, “I fought to protect all that makes our nation great, and that includes the public lands that belong to every American. I want to salute Rep. Jared Polis for his leadership in safeguarding our natural heritage, and look forward to Senator Michael Bennet introducing a Senate companion.”

People come to Colorado’s central Rocky Mountains to hike, camp, ski, kayak, raft, hunt, fish, mountain bike, horseback ride, ATV, and snowmobile. Outdoor recreation is critical to Colorado’s economy. It generates $13.2 billion in consumer spending and is responsible for 125,000 jobs that pay $4.2 billion in salaries and wages. The Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act would play an important role in maintaining and contributing to this important part of our state’s economy.

“Protected public lands help provide clean water and safeguard such lands from future development,” said Joe Macy, Eagle County Resident and Fishing Guide. “Clean water is essential for the healthy fisheries that our guests from all over need to enjoy the outdoors.” Over a dozen stakeholder groups have submitted letters to Rep. Polis in support of safeguarding Colorado’s Continental Divide. The coalition looks forward to working with Rep. Jared Polis and Senators Michael Bennet and Cory Gardner in safeguarding the areas that would be protected by the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act.
Rep. Polis introduces Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act

Alli Langley - alangle@summitdaily.com


Rep. Jared Polis (CO-02) introduced a bill Thursday, May 21, to preserve 58,000 acres of wilderness and recreation lands in Summit and eastern Eagle counties.

Crafted with input from dozens of stakeholder groups, including The Wilderness Society, Vail Resorts, the Outdoor Industry Association, the International Mountain Biking Association, Conservation Colorado, and affected municipalities and businesses, the Continental Divide Wilderness and Recreation Act aims to help sustain recreational resources, protect watersheds, preserve wildfire corridors and tourism economy.

The proposal would create new wilderness areas in the Tenmile Range, Williams Fork Mountains and Hoosier Ridge, as well as expand the existing Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak and Holy Cross Wilderness Areas.

The plan also would enhance outdoor recreation opportunities such as fishing, hunting, biking and backcountry snowsports by creating an 11,500-acre Recreation Management Area within the Tenmile Range. The proposal was drafted through a collaborative process with local stakeholders that not only maintained existing recreational uses but also incorporated community values by accounting for future improvements.

Earlier this month, Polis hosted the top Democrat on the Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Raul Grijalva (AZ-03), so he could tour the proposed protection areas and hear from local leaders about the importance of the bill.

With his new seat on the House Natural Resources Committee and Grijalva’s is optimistic about moving the bill through Congress this session.

For a map of the proposal, visit http://polis.house.gov/wilderness.
DENVER (AP) - Conservation groups hope their latest attempt to designate 90-square-miles in the heart of Colorado ski country as wilderness will have better luck now that Rep. Jared Polis has a seat on the House Natural Resources Committee.

The Colorado Democrat plans to introduce the Continental Divide Wilderness Area and Recreation bill Thursday, and Polis' new committee will have a key role in the decision.

The bill would expand some existing wilderness areas and create new ones on land bordering the Continental Divide in Summit and eastern Eagle counties.

The name of the bill was picked after a public contest with nearly 200 submissions. The winner was Bob Waters of Boulder.

(Copyright 2015 by The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved.)

Photo: Doug Pensinger, Getty Images
DENVER (AP) – Conservation groups hope their latest attempt to designate 90 square miles in the heart of Colorado ski country as wilderness will have better luck now that Rep. Jared Polis has a seat on the House Natural Resources Committee.

The Colorado Democrat introduced the Continental Divide Wilderness Area and Recreation bill Thursday, and Polis’ new committee will have a key role in the decision.

The bill would expand some existing wilderness areas and create new ones on land bordering the Continental Divide in Summit and eastern Eagle counties.

Polis said the measure has the backing of businesses in the Summit and Eagle counties, including ski resorts.

“They want to make sure some of the special spaces along the Continental Divide … are protected,” Polis said Thursday.

He said the designation also has the backing of the Climax molybdenum mine near Leadville, which owns some mineral rights near the area.

The proposal would create new wilderness areas in the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range and Hoosier Ridge, as well as expand the existing Holy Cross, Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

A hearing on the designation has not been scheduled.

(© Copyright 2015 The Associated Press. All Rights Reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.)
Congressmen laud local support for bill

VAIL — An effort to expand local wilderness areas has been bubbling for years. A new bill, with relatively modest goals, will be introduced this year. That bill apparently now has a powerful ally in Washington, D.C.

Rep. Jared Polis, a Boulder Democrat whose district includes roughly the eastern third of the Vail Valley, hosted a look-around at some of the areas proposed for protection on Thursday. The bill in Eagle County would add roughly 40,000 acres to the Eagles Nest and Holy Cross wilderness areas. It would also set aside roughly 10,000 acres for special management, meaning uses would be restricted.

In addition to a familiar cadre of state and local advocates, Thursday’s tour also included Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz. Grijalva is the ranking member of the House Natural Resources Committee. In Congress-speak, “ranking member” means Grijalva is the most senior Democrat on the committee. Republicans currently hold a majority in the House of Representatives, which means members of that party hold all committee chairmanships.

Still, Grijalva has some influence in the Capitol. And, after a tour that started at the Loveland ski area and ended in a meeting room in Vail, Grijalva said he was impressed with what he’d seen and heard.

Local Participation

Polis’ bill “meets the template for a bipartisan bill,” Grijalva said. A big part of that template is the level of local participation in drafting the bill.

The latest version of the Polis bill has support from the groups and individuals you’d expect — The Wilderness Society, Conservation Colorado and photographer John Fielder, among others.

Fielder and representatives from those groups praised the idea of...
The bill has also earned support from the town of Vail, Eagle County and other local governments. But the Vail Valley Mountain Bike Association also supports the proposal.

“We appreciated working with your staff,” said Diane Johnson, the communications and public affairs officer for the Eagle River Water and Sanitation District. While the district board has not yet taken an official position on the bill, the district during the past couple of years has asked for, and received, several boundary changes in the bill. District officials said those changes were needed to help ensure they were able to properly maintain and improve facilities that bring water out of the forests surrounding the Vail area.

Polis’ staff was also praised for working to ensure Colorado Springs Utilities would also be able to maintain the facilities it has in Eagle County — that city uses much of the water from Homestake Reservoir.

Spectrum of Recreation

Vail Resorts also supports the bill.

Rick Cables, vice president of natural resources and conservation at Vail Resorts Management Co., acknowledged that the resort company uses public lands in a very different way from wilderness preservation.

But nearby wilderness offers guests a “spectrum of recreation,” Cables said.

Scott Braden of Conservation Colorado said working with cyclists, water districts and others resulted in “dozens of changes” to the boundaries of the proposed wilderness expansion areas.

Supporters said they’re also happy with the work done on the bill, and encouraged action in Congress.

Garrett Reppenhagen is the Rocky Mountain director of the Vet Voice Foundation, a nonprofit veterans’ advocacy group.

Reppenhagen told the group about a time in Afghanistan when a group of soldiers and others gathered for a movie. The national anthem played before the main feature, and Reppenhagen said the images were all of the country’s natural areas.

Place of Healing

“That’s what spurred our pride,” Reppenhagen said, adding that wilderness can be a “place of healing” for veterans.
After about an hour of listening, Grijalva said he believes the proper elements are in place to bring a bill forward and get it passed. He said he and Polis would start putting together support for the bill when they return to the Capitol.

“We want a priority on this,” he said.

Making the bill a priority could mean that more committee members come for a visit.

“Once you see it, the commitment is a little stronger,” Grijalva said. “This is a tiny, well-done piece of legislation. We’ll strategize on where it needs to go next.”

Polis told the group he hoped the bill can be passed this year. But, he added, he’ll keep working to get it passed.
Vail Daily

Vail Daily letter: A great proposal

September 8, 2014
Letter to the Editor by Keith Minnick

What great news to hear of the Vail Town Council’s unanimous support of the wilderness protection plan that Rep. Jared Polis has introduced!

Their support is expressed in Resolution 22, which was introduced by Town Council member Margaret Rogers.

Coincidentally, the success of the board’s resolution came just on the eve of the commemoration of the passage of America’s Wilderness Act 50 years ago, in September of 1964.

Regarding the current bill introduced by Rep. Polis: Its benefits to Colorado are too numerous to describe here. A few of the major benefits, however, include preserving the natural beauty of wildlands and the natural, practical purposes these lands serve for a healthy ecosystem; the quality of life for all of us; and a huge sustenance of our economy.

Our great blessings of unspoiled landscapes are too precious to lose and vital to preserve. In this effort, the value of the Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act is immeasurable.

Having grown up in the Eagle River Valley, witnessing the increasing vulnerability of our natural environment and our quality of life, it’s reassuring when I see the sustaining steps made by residents who care about our home. Eagle County citizen Susie Kincade (and other diligent supporters) has worked tirelessly for decades in the effort to make such steps of progress, to better our community and its environment. With gratitude toward the Town Board, Susie recently noted “their foresight and support,” among many other things, and she applauded “the provision in the resolution that mentions the importance of a healthy watershed.”

From many, many citizens to the Vail Town Council to Rep. Polis, and to the countless individuals who have worked for this vital cause: Thank you very much!

Keith Minick
Edwards

http://www.vaildaily.com/opinion/12942138-113/town-council-introduced-natural
Why I call Colorado home

August 30, 2014
Op-Ed by Josh Lautenberg

When I was a kid, I never thought that I would end up in Colorado. I always assumed that I would follow the "family business" into politics. But there was something about the state that drew me in. Perhaps it was our towering mountains, chock-full of hiking and backpacking, skiing and mountain biking, and paddling and camping. Perhaps it was how people here are truly connected to the land and water. Or perhaps it was because of the fresh air and clean water.

The reasons why I was drawn to Colorado are the same reasons why I was happy to see U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-2nd CD, introduce legislation to safeguard the Central Mountains for future generations to enjoy. The Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act would protect roughly 60,000 acres of lands and waters in Summit and Eagle counties as wilderness and recreation areas.

The legislation will ensure that our way of life will be forever preserved. For me, that is skiing on our mountain majesties, first as a newcomer to Colorado, then as a competitor and instructor, and now as a father with my children. It is also hunting and fishing for the abundant wildlife that call the Central Mountains home. And it is enjoying all that our great outdoors have to offer during the summer months - hiking, paddling, camping, escaping to a place of solitude, or mountain biking, and dirt biking. All of these incredible outdoor recreation opportunities are why I call Colorado home.

And it ultimately became more than just a way of life, but also my livelihood. More and more people are moving to Colorado for the same reasons I did almost 25 years ago. People are choosing to live closer to protected public lands.

They want to be near clean air and water, wild places, and beautiful scenery. While I personally have seen people choosing to move here, the proof is in the pudding. A recent study from Headwaters Economics found that western states employment grew by 152 percent near protected areas. Additionally, jobs in counties near protected public lands increased 345 percent over the last 40 years.

Wilderness is one of our country's greatest assets. It provides unparalleled protection for clean water, healthy air, and wildlife habitat. In fact, this September marks the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, a law that was intended to set aside our country's wildest places for future generations.

Of the 60,000 acres, Rep. Polis' legislation would safeguard over 40,000 acres as wilderness and more than 16,000 acres as recreation management areas. The legislation would add wilderness to the Holy Cross, Eagles Nest and Ptarmigan Ridge wilderness areas, and would create the Williams Fork Mountains, Tenmile Range, and Hoosier Ridge wilderness areas.

The Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act would also boost recreation opportunities by creating the Tenmile Recreation Management Area, already a recreation haven for mountain bikers and skiers. Outdoor recreation is a booming industry in Colorado, generating $13.2 billion annually in consumer spending and responsible for 125,000 jobs that pay $4.2 billion in salaries and wages.

Protecting the Central Mountains is good for our economy and our way of life. And Rep. Polis' legislation is an important part of the puzzle to completing the Central Mountains Outdoor Heritage Proposal, a community-crafted vision in concert with Sen. Mark Udall to conserve wilderness in the White River National Forest for future generations.

In the spirit of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, we are celebrating this bedrock law by looking forward to protecting our natural legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Josh Lautenberg
Vail

Rep. Polis announces wilderness expansion bill in Breckenridge

August 24, 2014
Article by Alli Langley
***Also ran in the Summit Daily News***

BRECKENRIDGE — Volunteer wilderness rangers in the high country soon could have thousands of acres more to roam if a new bill passes through Congress.

Friends of the Eagles Nest Wilderness would appreciate that, said Currie Craven, board chairman of the nonprofit. The organization has about 50 volunteers who help the Forest Service in the Eagles Nest and Parmirgin Peak wildernesses in Summit County and the Holy Cross Wilderness in Eagle County.

U.S. Rep. Jared Polis, D-Boulder, came to Breckenridge on Sunday and announced the introduction of a conservation bill that would designate 60,000 acres of national forest land in Summit and Eagle counties with federal wilderness and recreation area protections.

“This proposal will benefit wildlife, strengthen our local businesses and economy and protect our beautiful wilderness in order to ensure it can be enjoyed by generations to come,” he said. “We’re going to continue to work until we pass this bill into law.”

The Rocky Mountain Recreation and Wilderness Preservation Act would designate 40,000 acres of new wilderness and expansions to existing wilderness areas including the Eagles Nest and Holy Cross wildernesses.

Sen. Mark Udall is reviewing public comments, making adjustments and crafting legislation that closely resembles Polis’ bill but adds Pitkin County. Udall is expected to introduce it in early 2015.

According to Conservation Colorado, the bill is a critical step toward a larger Central Mountain region effort to protect 250,000 acres in and around the White River National Forest, the most highly visited national forest in the country.

DITCHING AN OLD NAME

Conservationists have been promoting similar legislation, formerly known as the Hidden Gems Wilderness Proposal, for at least eight years.

In 2010, advocates formally proposed 244,000 acres of new wilderness designation in Summit and Eagle counties after about four years of study, vetting and deliberation.

That proposal sought wilderness designation for about 45,000 acres of federal land in Summit County and for 379,000 total acres in Summit, Eagle, Pitkin and Gunnison counties combined.

Advocates argued the plan would provide much-needed protections to mid-elevation habitats in Colorado, since much of the state’s existing wilderness land is high-altitude rock and ice.

Between 2006 and 2010, Hidden Gems went through 86 drafts and proponents removed more than 97,000 acres.

The movement gained momentum when Polis and Udall jumped on board with parallel bills in the U.S. House and Senate.

Polis unsuccessfully pushed the Eagle and Summit County Wilderness Act in 2010 and 2011 and faced local criticism from mountain bikers and snowmobilers worried about losing access to favorite trails, as motorized recreation is prohibited in federally designated wilderness areas.

Some opposition also came from those charged with protecting communities from wildfire.

For the past two years, Polis has worked with local governments, water providers, land managers, constituents and conservation and recreation organizations to address comments and concerns.

That collaborative process led to a recreation- and conservation-oriented bill, reflected in the proposal’s new name. The bill would not close any motorized routes or access points currently open to public use.

Instead, some areas would be labeled with “companion designations,” meaning they are wilderness buffers in which motorized recreation and resource extraction
would be prohibited but mountain biking and fire-protection work would be allowed.

Though companion designations were part of Polis’ original legislation, the areas named have been clarified and boundaries adjusted in response to feedback.

This latest bill would designate about 40,000 acres of new wilderness and more than 10,000 acres of recreation management areas in Summit and Eagle counties.

INCLUDING THE RIDERS
New to the proposal this year is the Tenmile Recreation Management Area, which would be divided into two parts, with one stretching southwest from Frisco and the other spreading south of Breckenridge Ski Resort.

Aaron Clark, conservation manager with the International Mountain Biking Association in Boulder, said he was excited about the Tenmile Recreation Area and proud of the work that has gone into carefully crafting its boundaries.

He called the proposed area a great example of bringing the qualities aspired to in wilderness together with other recreational uses.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, headquartered in Boulder, outdoor recreation in Colorado generates $13.2 billion in consumer spending and is responsible for 125,000 jobs that pay $4.2 billion in salaries and wages.

A-Basin COO Alan Henceroth said he was particularly excited about the wilderness designation around Porcupine Gulch between A-Basin and Keystone Resort.

One of the proposed wilderness areas at Hoosier Ridge is home to a plant variety that researchers say is found almost nowhere else on earth, said Craven, with Friends of the Eagles Nest Wilderness.

People sometimes snowmobile there, he said, threatening the plant, and the wilderness designation could educate people about the importance of preserving the area. He added that snowmobilers could still enjoy riding on trails on both sides of Hoosier Pass, and be applauded Polis’ inclusion of snowmobilers’ wishes when he excluded Elliot Ridge in Eagles Nest Wilderness in this bill.

Snowmobilers and bikers sometimes ride on public lands where they’re not allowed, said Summit County Commissioner Kari Stiegemeyer, but the bill wouldn’t close any trails or areas designated for motorized use to those users.

Some people will always be philosophically opposed to the idea of wilderness, she added, but people should know these public lands are for the enjoyment and benefit of everyone.

LOCAL SUPPORT BUT HURDLES IN D.C.
How do you put a dollar number on clean air and water?

A report prepared by Wild Connections, a Colorado conservation nonprofit, quantified the ecosystem services each acre of wilderness provides in terms of water and air purification, and the 60,000 acres proposed in this bill would amount to nearly $10.5 million.

After years of discussions, the latest version of the proposal seems to have broad public support, said Scott Braden, wilderness advocate with Conservation Colorado.

His colleague Susie Kincaid lamented that a new wilderness area hasn’t been designated in Colorado since the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness in 2009, despite efforts like Polis’ and historically bipartisan support.

“The sad part about that is, as these bills languish in Congress, the lands are disappearing,” she said. “Once they’re gone, they’re gone.”

For more information about Polis’ bill, including detailed maps of the proposed areas, visit www.polis.house.gov/wildness.