

July 28, 2022

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

We write to you today to urge you to pursue every available opportunity, legislative and administrative, to secure the protections that our communities have long advocated for in the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act (S. 173). Each of the areas in the CORE Act has been extensively vetted for over a decade and revised to a point that these protections are ready to be enacted. These designations continue to have the support of past and present commissioners and a broad range of stakeholders from all of our communities.

In recognition of the partisan vote in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on May 3, 2022, we encourage you to pursue conservation designations from the Biden Administration, including National Monuments and other administrative protections that would safeguard these cherished landscapes as soon as possible. Many of your colleagues from other states are in support of the CORE Act already, thanks to the diligent work of you and your staff working hard for Colorado. We hope that those members of Congress who have expressed opposition will acknowledge that the CORE Act embodies Colorado values and has support from across the political spectrum in order to support the legislation.

While we would like to work with you to administratively implement as much of CORE Act protections as possible, as a first step we urge you to focus on the following priorities:

- Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument *Create a new Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument through the Antiquities Act at Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range.* This new monument will honor the service of our veterans from the 10th Mountain Division who trained at Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range, served our nation with distinction in World War II and returned home to help found Colorado's outdoor recreation economy.
- Thompson Divide Protection *Protect the Thompson Divide portion of the CORE Act from new mineral or gas development.* While we continue to work on passing the CORE Act, the interim protection of this landscape can be accomplished with an administrative mineral withdrawal under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.
- San Juan Mountains Protection *Provide interim protection to areas proposed for permanent protection in the San Juan Mountains title of the CORE Act.* We would like to see the pending GMUG National Forest Plan include a Wilderness Recommendation for the proposed Wilderness Areas and Special Management Area for the proposed Sheep Mountain SMA in the Final Plan. In addition, we would like to see an administrative

mineral withdrawal for the proposed Naturita Canyon Area. This will provide these areas with protection while we continue to work on passing the CORE Act.

- Curecanti National Recreation Area *Create a fishing access easement acquisition.* Immediate steps should be taken to ensure that the Bureau of Reclamation upholds its long standing commitment to obtain public fishing access on the Gunnison River above Blue Mesa Reservoir, which was lost when the Aspinall Unit was created. Finally, appropriate protections for lands identified in the CORE Act as part of the Curecanti National Recreation Area that will be managed in the interim by the U.S. Forest Service should be incorporated, where appropriate, into the GMUG Forest Plan Revision currently underway.

We greatly appreciate your partnership in these efforts, and all of the work you have done to advance the CORE Act in the Senate. We continue to hope for final passage of the bill and for the support of President Biden to sign it into law. In the interim, we urge your support of appropriate administrative options that can provide immediate protections for these areas.

Sincerely,



Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle County Commissioner



Hilary Cooper, San Miguel County Commissioner



Scott Fetchenhier, San Juan County Commissioner



Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County Commissioner



Elisabeth Lawrence, Summit County Commissioner



Greg Poschman, Pitkin County Commissioner



Ben Tisdell, Ouray County Commissioner