



COLORADO OUTDOOR RECREATION & ECONOMY ACT

Frequently Asked Questions about the CORE Act

Q: Does the CORE Act ban all motorized use on 420,000 acres in Colorado? Is it a 420,000 acre wilderness bill?

No. Of the roughly 420,000 acres in the CORE Act, over half is a federal mineral withdrawal, which has no effect or limitation on any uses in the area except for the prohibition of future oil and gas leasing. Less than a quarter of the acreage, around 71,000 acres, is wilderness, and much of that is the expansion of existing wilderness areas.

Q: Does the CORE Act close roads or trails that are currently open to motorized use?

The CORE Act does not close any existing roads, jeep trails, off highway vehicle trails or motorcycle trails. Claims that the CORE Act will close roads on Ophir Pass, Imogene Pass or the roads to Yankee Boy Basin and Holy Cross City are inaccurate. In developing the legislation, we coordinated closely with motorized users to remove from the proposal all motorized trails that a new designation could affect. Motorized trails that are unaffected include some of the state's finest snowmobile trails on Kebler Pass and the Sunlight to Powderhorn (SP) Trail.

Q: Will any groomed snowmobile trail networks be closed to usage?

The CORE Act does not close any groomed snowmobile trails. There are groomed trails within the Thompson Divide portion of the CORE Act, but the designations for the Thompson Divide do not

affect snowmobiling or other motorized uses. Summer and winter motorized users have been part of [the diverse coalition that supports the Thompson Divide legislation](#).

Q: Will the trail buffers (i.e., the distance between the new proposed wilderness boundaries and existing trails and roads) be adequate to maintain existing trails outside of the wilderness areas?

The proposed boundaries of the wilderness and special management areas in the bill were crafted to protect the existing motorized and mechanized road and trail uses, with the trails being located outside of any proposed area that could restrict its use. The CORE Act uses the wilderness buffer distance recommendations from the US Forest Service, which have been used for wilderness bills in Colorado since 1993. This allows for a full range of uses on the trails near the wilderness areas, including motorized use. These buffers will accommodate maintenance on the trails to ensure they can stay open and maintained. The Forest Service is not aware of any lost motorized access from the use of these buffer distances in Colorado. Similarly, we have not received information that suggests motorized use has been lost as a result of these recommended buffer distances.

Q: How were the areas proposed for designation under the bill chosen? Did you consult with the motorized community?

The areas in this legislation were all developed after we received formal written requests from the county commissions in the areas requesting legislation. All of the relevant stakeholders were consulted in the development of the legislation and, over the course of many years, thousands of acres of potential designations were removed from consideration at the request of the motorized community.

Q: How has the CORE Act changed to reflect the newly created Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument?

Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper, and Congressman Neguse led the effort to ask President Biden to use his powers under the Antiquities Act to create a- new National Monument at Camp Hale. In October 2022, President Biden designated the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument.

Given the permanent protections afforded by the monument, the Camp Hale National Historic Landscape and Tenmile Recreation Area have been removed from the CORE Act. The CORE Act continues to contain a provision to create the Sandy Treat Overlook, which will honor a 10th Mountain Division veteran who spent many years advocating for the protection of Camp Hale. The bill will also designate the Tenmile Wilderness Area within the boundaries of the monument.

Q: With the new effort to provide an administrative mineral withdrawal at Thompson Divide is there still a need for the Thompson Divide portion of the CORE Act?

In October 2022, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland accepted a proposal for an administrative mineral withdrawal from the US Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, initiating a two-year segregation prohibiting all new mining and drilling while the agency studies the proposed mineral withdrawal. If approved, an administrative mineral withdrawal would prohibit any new mining and drilling for a period of twenty years on the Thompson Divide.

The progress on the administrative withdrawal is welcome news to the community leaders who have long advocated for permanent protection for Thompson Divide. The CORE Act builds on this success by establishing a permanent mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide.

Q: Why does the Thompson Divide include Mt. Emmons and areas near Crested Butte?

In spring 2022, over 19,000 acres were added to the Thompson Divide mineral withdrawal at the request of Gunnison County, the Town of Crested Butte, and a mining company - Freeport McMoRan. This addition enshrines an agreement between these parties to prevent future mining in the area and ends a long controversy surrounding a proposed mine outside of Crested Butte. In return, the community will coordinate with Freeport McMoRan to expedite a mutually beneficial land exchange.

Q: Aren't the areas being designated in this bill places that Congress previously removed for consideration as wilderness?

No. Congress has not removed any acreage in this bill from consideration for wilderness. While some have inaccurately pointed to the 1980 Colorado Wilderness bill as precluding future wilderness designations, Colorado Senator Will Armstrong (R) noted at the time that the roadless review language used in section 107 of that bill does not mean the opportunity for wilderness designation would be foreclosed in the future. This sentiment was enshrined on page 23 of the Committee Report for the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Bill, which stated: "The decision to not designate these areas as wilderness is made on the basis of the circumstances and information presented to the Committee and is not irreversible. The Committee expects that the Forest Service, under established laws, regulations, and policies, will continue to examine the full range of management options in the preparation and revision of management plans for these areas. If the Forest Service determines in the future that circumstances warrant the designation of these areas as wilderness, new recommendations may be made to Congress" and "[t]he language of section 5 does not prescribe any particular type of management for the lands involved..." Congress has designated a number of new wilderness areas in Colorado since 1980.

Q: Does this bill prohibit grazing in the newly designated areas?

The CORE Act does not prohibit continued grazing in the areas proposed for wilderness, special management designation or mineral withdrawal. Consistent with earlier wilderness designations in Colorado and elsewhere, the CORE Act provides for the continued grazing of livestock in wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Act and Congressional Grazing Guidelines. Grazing can also continue in all of the other special management designations proposed in the bill. The Thompson Divide provisions were requested in part by local ranchers and grazers and will protect the quality of existing grazing and agricultural uses in the region.

Q: Does this bill limit the Forest Service's ability to manage our forests or fight wildfires?

The bill explicitly allows the Forest Service to carry out activities that it determines to be necessary to control the spread of insect and disease outbreaks in the proposed Wilderness Areas, as provided under the Wilderness Act. It also allows the Forest Service to carry out any activity it determines to be necessary, including the use of aircraft to fight wildfires in proposed Wilderness areas. Similar language has been included in earlier wilderness bills in Colorado that have passed into law, such as the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act in 2014. The special management areas have even broader forest and wildfire management provisions.

Q: Are water rights protected in this legislation?

Yes, the bill protects existing water rights. The bill includes "headwaters language" to protect any water rights, water resources, or facilities that exist in areas designated as wilderness by the bill. The headwaters language was first used in the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act. At the request of water community leaders, Congress has included the headwaters language in every Colorado wilderness designation bill passed since 1993, including the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act in 2014. Similarly, the special management areas would protect water rights. In whole, the bill will significantly enhance key watersheds and the quality water they provide to water users locally and across the state. The bill was developed in close consultation with and enjoys strong support from an array of water users and providers.