



<https://coloradosun.com/2022/06/27/colorado-conservation-restoration-america-beautiful-opinion/>

Opinion: Colorado's leadership needed to support conservation goal

3 Colorado mayors on the benefits of land restoration and preservation, and why the state should commit to the national effort

[Dan Shore, Jonathan Godes, and John Clark](#)

1:30 AM MDT on Jun 27, 2022

We recently joined 60 of our fellow Colorado local elected officials in sending Gov. Jared Polis a letter to express our support for a statewide conservation goal in step with President Biden's national [Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful conservation plan](#). That plan includes a commitment to conserving and restoring 30% of our nation's lands and waters — public and private — by 2030, something scientists say is necessary to combat climate change and secure a climate resilient future for the nation.



From left: Dan Shore, Jonathan Godes, and John Clark

Conserving and restoring Colorado's lands and waters, climate refuges, as well as wildlife corridors and movement zones, will be critical to meeting this objective. Since 2019, Colorado has accomplished numerous conservation achievements in the state through the [Executive Order to Conserve Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors](#); the 2019 passage of the [Protect Public Welfare Oil and Gas Operations](#) law; through the establishment of the [Colorado](#)

[Outdoor Regional Partnerships Initiative](#) and an Inter-Agency Conservation and Recreation Council.

Similarly, since 2019 the state has invested more than \$100 million in conservation and restoration programs approved by the state General Assembly and established the [Colorado Outdoor Equity Grant Program](#) and the [Keep Colorado Wild Pass](#), which together will inject tens of millions of dollars into future conservation efforts and improve outdoor access for disproportionately impacted communities. And we have two new state parks at Fishers Peak and Sweetwater Lake!

Colorado's storied history of conservation leadership spans across the aisle. Whether Republican, Independent, or Democrat, conservation initiatives regularly receive strong support from Coloradans. For the past half-century, nearly every U.S. Senator from Colorado has sponsored legislation to create new wilderness areas, and just last Congress both Colorado Senators supported full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Now, Colorado is positioned to become a leading contributor to this national effort.

As local leaders, we understand the value of maintaining Colorado's status as a national conservation leader given the wide range of local benefits, such as the increased opportunity for access, recreation, and appreciation of nature; preservation of cultural resources; realization of a more inclusive vision of the outdoors; improved resilience of our communities, natural systems, and wildlife to a changing climate; and safeguarding of our economies and community vitality. To realize these benefits, we must make a clear commitment as a state to the national goal.

Members of Colorado's congressional delegation previously [wrote](#) to the Biden administration regarding the [America the Beautiful plan](#), saying "success will require a whole-of-government approach, coordination across Federal, Tribal, State, and local agencies, a commitment to collaboration, a willingness to compromise, and good-faith conversations." We could not agree more.

Acknowledging both the challenges and the opportunities, we are looking to Gov. Polis and his administration to commit to the national conservation goal and put forth a similar, but uniquely Colorado, plan that incorporates the lands and waters that can both immediately, and over the long-run, contribute towards a measurable state conservation goal.

As mayors, we are eager to partner with the Polis administration on these efforts, such as engaging in local outreach and bolstering the voices of Tribal nations, farmers, ranchers, hunters, anglers, conservationists, recreationists, and communities, including those disproportionately impacted, that depend on our state's natural resources.

As Coloradans, we succeed in efforts like this when we work together. We look forward to partnering with the Polis administration on laying the groundwork for Colorado to step into the role as the national leader at the state level for implementing the America the Beautiful conservation initiative.

Dan Shore is mayor of Salida. Jonathan Godes is mayor of Glenwood Springs. John Clark is mayor of Ridgway.