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THIS IS YOUR LAND

# Colorado lawmakers work to preserve public lands

[Heidi Beedle](#)

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White River National Forest  
Scott Mecum / U.S. Department of Agriculture

**On Feb. 26, the U.S. House** of Representatives passed H.R. 803, the Protecting America's Wilderness and Public Lands Act, a package of eight public lands bills that had passed in the House last session but failed to become law. It was introduced by Rep. Diana DeGette, D-CD1,

and included her Colorado Wilderness Act and the CORE Act, first sponsored in the House by Rep. Joe Neguse, D-CD2.

DeGette's bill designates specified lands in Colorado managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Forest Service as wilderness and as components of the National Wilderness Preservation System. It designates approximately 1.49 million acres of public land as wilderness and incorporates more than 1,000 river miles into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

"This historic legislation is a major step towards protecting 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030, a bold goal that can conserve our national heritage and support local economies," said Jesse Prentice-Dunn, policy director at the Center for Western Priorities, in a news release. "The components of this bill are not flashes in the pan — they are the result of years, if not decades, of advocacy from local communities seeking to protect landscapes they depend on."

**Neguse and Sens. Michael Bennet** and John Hickenlooper introduced the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act earlier this year, to conserve more than 400,000 acres, from the San Juans to the Continental Divide. Protected lands include Camp Hale, the World War II-era training area for the 10th Mountain Division. "Camp Hale is important to the [10th] Mountain Division of our armed forces, serving as a training ground for snow forces critical to success in World War II," read a statement from the Board of Eagle County Commissioners. "Camp Hale was also the launching grounds for Colorado's Ski Industry. Our economy in Eagle County is powered in large part by the outdoor recreation industry. The CORE Act is vital to our environment, our wildlife, and our economy. As Colorado District Three local elected officials and constituents we are thrilled the CORE Act has passed the House of Representatives and look forward to it passing in the Senate."

Additional lands identified in the CORE Act include Tenmile Recreation Management Area, Porcupine Gulch Wildlife Conservation Area, Williams Fork Mountains Wildlife Conservation Area, Sheep Mountain and Liberty Bell East Special Management Areas and Curecanti National Recreation Area.

Both of these Colorado public lands acts were introduced in 2019 during the Trump administration, but never got a hearing in the Senate. Rep. Doug Lamborn, R-CD5, voted against both bills in the House.

It's time for the Senate to pass this important bill for Colorado this year.

— *Tamara Pogue*

Public lands and outdoor recreation account for a large portion of Colorado's tourism industry, which has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. "Public lands are the backbone of our mountain communities," said Summit County Commissioner Tamara Pogue in a news release. "The CORE Act will protect our public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities to boost the economy as we recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Colorado local elected officials thank Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper for reintroducing this bill in the Senate, and Congressman Joe Neguse for reintroducing this bill in the House. We are celebrating the passage of the CORE Act this week through the US House of Representatives, and we thank Colorado Representatives Ed Perlmutter, Diana DeGette, and Jason Crow for cosponsoring and voting for this important piece of legislation. Now, it's time for the Senate to pass this important bill for Colorado this year. We look forward to continuing to support Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper's leadership and passing this bill through the Senate."

Many counties in Colorado and related interest groups worked on the legislation that would become the CORE Act. "San Miguel County stakeholders have diligently negotiated the designations in the CORE Act for over a decade," said San Miguel County Commissioner Hilary Cooper in a news release. "The CORE Act has the support of elected officials, landowners, recreationalists, ranchers, sportsmen/women, veterans, miners, oil & gas producers, and many more stakeholder groups. We worked hard to gather the facts, negotiate, and compromise. As local elected officials, representing our constituents in Colorado's 3rd Congressional District, we look forward to the passage of the CORE Act."

The Wilderness and Public Lands Act will move to the Senate for consideration. “It is no mistake that in recent years some of the largest bills to pass through a gridlocked Congress have been ones to protect our iconic public lands,” said Prentice-Dunn. “Indeed, poll after poll shows that voters across the country strongly support protecting our lands, waters, and wildlife for future generations.”



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News Reporter

Heidi Beedle is a former soldier, educator, activist, and animal welfare worker. She received a Bachelor’s in English from UCCS. She has worked as a freelance writer covering LGBTQ issues, nuclear disasters, cattle mutilations, and social movements.