

CORE Act passes House with bipartisan support; awaits hearing and passage in Senate

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The Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 25 as part of a public lands package, along with the Colorado Wilderness Act and protections for the Grand Canyon.

The CORE Act is one of the first bills to pass the House this year, highlighting the urgency and broad, national support for preserving America's lands and waters. Preserving Colorado's public lands will help achieve the national goal to protect 30% of our country's lands and waters by 2030.

During the 116th Congress, the CORE Act passed in the House with bipartisan support twice, most recently as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The bill would preserve roughly 400,000 acres of public lands, including the Continental Divide and Camp Hale, Wilderness in the San Juan Mountains, the Thompson Divide, and officially define the boundaries of Curecanti National Recreation Area while restoring public access to the surrounding fishery.

These areas include some of Colorado's most iconic, historic, and ecologically significant public lands, and their preservation would bolster Colorado's world-renown outdoor recreation opportunities, supporting local economies, preserving critical wildlife habitat, and honoring our country's veterans.

Multiple polls have shown that Coloradans support the CORE Act. Both the New Bridge Strategies poll, commissioned by the CORE Act Coalition, and the 2020 Conservation in the West poll, found about two-thirds of those surveyed supported the legislation. Additionally, a Zogby poll from Dec. 2020 found 84% of Coloradans supported the CORE Act.

The outdoor recreation industry is an economic powerhouse in Colorado, contributing \$62 billion annually and responsible for a half million jobs, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This past year has shown the world how important public lands and waters are, as throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people have turned to nature for their physical, emotional, and mental health. However, with that increase of attention and visitation comes the awareness that we need more protected lands and waters, not less.

"The House passage of the CORE Act represents an opportunity to use our local public lands to help us solve the climate crisis," said Chris Caskey, Founder of Delta Brick and Climate Co.

"As a small Western Slope business, we recognize the importance of protecting our public lands for future generations. Furthermore, the CORE Act clarifies how we can mitigate waste methane, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating jobs. With the support of a broad range of diverse stakeholders, the Senate passage of the CORE Act is long overdue, and is an investment in Colorado's future."

The bill would preserve healthy wildlife habitat by protecting key areas from road building, new mines and oil and gas drilling, and other activities that would degrade wildlife habitat and watershed values. It would also safeguard backcountry hunting opportunities and important big game habitat on our public lands across the state, in addition to protecting habitat for black bear, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, moose, deer, elk, lynx, sage grouse, and wild turkey. And it would

preserve the land bridge and critical wildlife migration corridor over Interstate 70 at the Eisenhower Tunnel.

Summit County, Colorado Commissioner Tamara Pogue said, “Public lands are the backbone of our mountain communities. 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.

Given the broad support, decades-long collaboration, and the existential threat of climate change, the CORE Act coalition is urging the Senate to swiftly move and pass this legislation.