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Congress passes Cory Gardner's public lands bill

Trump expected to sign the Great American Outdoors Act



Andy Colwell, Special to The Denver Post

U.S. Sen. Cory Gardner speaks during a press conference with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke at Rocky Mountain National Park's Alluvial Fan Trail area in 2017 as they announced a plan to distribute more than \$50 million in National Parks infrastructure and maintenance projects. One of the projects to receive funding is the Alluvial Fan Trail itself, which was destroyed by flooding in 2013.

By JUSTIN WINGERTER | jwingerter@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
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The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a major public lands bill introduced by [Sen. Cory Gardner](#), a Republican from Yuma. The Great American Outdoors Act passed by a vote of 310-107. It previously had passed the Senate, so it now goes to [President Donald Trump](#), who [has said he will sign it](#).

“By fixing and repairing our public lands and national parks, we not only have the chance to improve the roads, hiking trails, campsites and visitor centers for generations to enjoy,” Gardner said in a statement after the House vote, “but also to create thousands of job opportunities in Colorado and across the nation at a time when our country needs them most.”

Gardner has highlighted the bill often as he fights for re-election against [John Hickenlooper](#), a Denver Democrat. The Gardner campaign [released a TV ad](#) about his work on the Great American Outdoors Act on Tuesday.

The legislation permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been chronically underfunded for decades. The fund uses oil and gas revenue to expand public lands, safeguard natural areas and protect cultural heritage sites in every state across the country.

“For over five decades, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has invested approximately \$278.6 million in the state of Colorado,” said Frisco Mayor Hunter Mortensen.

The bill also addresses a \$20 billion backlog of deferred maintenance in national parks. The Great American Outdoors Act has had significant bipartisan support since Trump announced in March that he likes it. [Sen. Michael Bennet](#), a Denver Democrat, was a cosponsor of the legislation. But in the House on Wednesday, Colorado’s votes were split along party lines. The state’s four House Democrats voted in favor and the three Colorado Republicans voted against.

“One of our country’s most popular national parks, Rocky Mountain National Park, faces a significant maintenance backlog of \$84 million,” said [Rep. Joe Neguse](#), a Lafayette Democrat, during [a speech on the House floor](#). “Our park employees are working incredibly hard, but they can’t do it alone.”

Ivanka Trump, the president’s daughter and adviser, will highlight the Great American Outdoors Act in remarks [Thursday morning at Rocky Mountain National Park](#).