

Guest opinion: Thank you, President Biden, for new Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument

County Commissioners from Eagle and Summit Counties in Colorado - Kathy Chandler-Henry, Matt Scherr, Jeanne McQueeney, Josh Blanchard, Tamara Pogue, and Elisabeth Lawrence



Troops from the 10th Mountain Division train at Camp Hale during World War II. When they returned home from fighting, those soldiers are credited with creating the modern U.S. ski industry, including the development of Vail. (Vail Daily archive)

As county commissioners from Summit and Eagle counties, we are incredibly excited about the new national monument featuring Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range. Our counties are at the heart of the Colorado Rocky Mountains that make our state famous across the world. Their scenic beauty and endless adventures are treasures that are loved by millions of people. The designation of this new national monument will help us protect and enhance the area and its legacy.

In 1942, Camp Hale was established for use in winter and mountain warfare training. It was there that the historic 10th Mountain Division of the United States Army was founded. Having discovered its soldiers were unprepared for the harsh mountainous theaters in World War II, the United States Army established Camp Hale in 1942 to correct that problem.

The surrounding areas, including the Tenmile Range, provided excellent terrain for just this type of training that is credited with successfully pushing back the Germans in Italy's Apennine Mountains. After the war, many of the veterans who served at Camp Hale played crucial roles in establishing the world-class ski industry for which our counties are famous.

This new national monument at Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range will honor this history and provide new opportunities for the future. The history of Camp Hale and those who served there will be protected, and generations to come will have an opportunity to learn in-depth about how they contributed to victory in World War II.

As visitors come to learn, they will also contribute to our local economy. The towering mountains and beautiful lakes of the Tenmile Range already provide popular ways for people to experience the Rocky Mountains. Quandary Peak within the range is currently the most hiked 14er in Colorado. The Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument will protect these treasures and provide crucial resources to preserve them as visits to the area grow.

These landscapes are the ancestral lands of the Ute people and were often used as hunting and fishing grounds during summers and [trails](#) were used in the late fall through spring. From the mid-sixteenth through the late-nineteenth century, the Eagle County area was primarily inhabited by the Yampa and Parianuche Ute bands, and in the early 19th century the Arapaho also used the area for hunting in the summer. Though an 1868 treaty promised land to the Utes, they were forcibly removed by white settlers by 1882. The many cultural resources in the area need to be protected.

The public lands within our counties, with their rich history and culture, are integral to our future. An important step forward is establishing Camp Hale and the Tenmile Range as Colorado's newest national monument. We thank Sen. Michael Bennet and the members of Colorado's delegation who have worked for years to preserve these areas and thank President Joe Biden for designating the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument.

This column was written by Eagle County commissioners Kathy Chandler-Henry, Matt Scherr, and Jeanne McQueeney and Summit County commissioners Josh Blanchard, Tamara Pogue, and Elisabeth Lawrence.