

Guest commentary: Rep. Scott Tipton needs to vote for Great American Outdoors Act for benefit of CD3

Opinion **OPINION** | July 21, 2020

Signing on Below is a list of CD3 elected officials who signed on to this letter from The Mountain Pact to Rep. Scott Tipton:

- Chief County Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle County
- County Commissioner Matt Scherr, Eagle County
- County Commissioner Jeanne McQueeney, Eagle County
- County Commissioner, Kelly McNicholas Kury, Vice Chair, Pitkin County
- County Commissioner Lance Waring, San Miguel County
- County Commissioner Hilary Cooper, San Miguel County
- Mayor Bill Kane, Mayor, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember Gary Tennenbaum, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember Glenn Drummond, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember David Knight, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember Ryan Slack, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember Elyse Hottel, Town of Basalt
- Councilmember Bill Infante, Town of Basalt
- Mayor Jim Schmidt, Town of Crested Butte
- Councilmember Will Dujardin, Town of Crested Butte
- Councilmember Barbara Noseworthy, City of Durango
- Mayor Laila Benitez, Town of Mountain Village
- Mayor Pro Tem Dan Caton, Town of Mountain Village
- Councilmember Patrick Berry, Town of Mountain Village
- Councilmember Natalie Binder, Town of Mountain Village
- Councilmember Peter Duprey, Town of Mountain Village
- Councilmember Jack Gilbride, Town of Mountain Village
- Councilmember Marti Prohaska, Town of Mountain Village
- Mayor Corinne Platt, Town of Ophir
- Mayor John Clark, Town of Ridgway
- Mayor Markey Butler, Town of Snowmass Village
- Mayor Pro-Tem Bob Sirkus, Town of Snowmass Village
- Councilmember Alyssa Shenk, Town of Snowmass Village
- Councilmember Bill Madsen, Town of Snowmass Village
- Councilmember Tom Goode, Town of Snowmass Village

- Councilmember Sonja Macys, Town of Steamboat Springs
- Mayor Delanie Young, Town of Telluride Mayor Pro Tem, Todd Brown, Town of Telluride
- Councilmember Adrienne Christy, Town of Telluride
- Councilmember Lars Carlson, Town of Telluride
- Councilmember Geneva Shaunette, Town of Telluride
- Councilmember Tom Watkinson, Town of Telluride

It's been quite a year. The COVID-19 virus has impacted our communities, nation and the entire world. While we navigate these challenging times, we are encouraged by the remarkably bipartisan effort in Congress to pass the Great American Outdoors Act, which could provide much-needed economic relief to our communities in these unsettling times.

The GAOA would fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million annually and provide much-needed funding for the crippling \$12 billion deferred maintenance backlog at our national parks. Funding for GAOA comes from royalties from existing offshore oil and gas leases — not taxes.

The legislation passed the Senate in June with a bipartisan vote of 73 to 25 with support from Republican Sens. Mitch McConnell, Steve Daines and Cory Gardner, along with Democrats including Sen. Michael Bennet, who has been working on addressing these issues for nearly a decade.

The companion bill in the House, which will likely come to the floor later this month, has 25 Republican co-sponsors and the support of Colorado representatives Jason Crow, Joe Neguse, Ed Perlmutter and Diana DeGeette. President Donald Trump has promised to sign the bill after it passes the House. This historic vote reflects a consensus among Americans of every stripe on the importance of our public lands for both their economic and health benefits.

Rep. Scott Tipton has said that “Colorado’s 3rd Congressional District is home to some of the most cherished public lands in the country, and we must ensure responsible management and protection of them.” No one who lives or works in his district would ever argue with that — we certainly don’t.

With that in mind, we ask Rep. Tipton to cast his vote for the GAOA when it comes to the House floor. Without question, many of our mountain towns with outdoor recreation- and tourism-based economies in his district will benefit from the increased funding for land protection and park maintenance.

The legislation is consistent with the values of the majority of District 3 constituents. LWCF has already funded the improvements at popular sites like the Ouray Hot Springs Park and Telluride River Trail. The park maintenance funding will be put to good use at District 3 public lands, including Canyons of the Ancients and Colorado National Monuments, as well as Great Sand Dunes, Black Canyon of the Gunnison, and Mesa Verde National Parks.

Many of the local economies in Colorado’s 3rd Congressional District, which rely on visitors to public lands, have taken a big financial hit because of the pandemic. The increased funding for lands protections and park maintenance will help us to provide the very best for all those who visit our towns — those visitors who help drive our local economies by staying in our lodges, eating in our restaurants and shopping for outdoor gear. The GAOA will ensure that our parks,

trails and public lands recover from this public health crisis and continue to be economic drivers for our communities.

We hope Rep. Tipton will vote for the GAOA and help ensure that our communities, local businesses and public lands emerge stronger when the coronavirus is finally behind us. It would be especially rewarding if our longtime representative, Congressman Tipton, is part of the historic bipartisan passage of the Great American Outdoors Act, adding to his service to Coloradans.

Editor's note: This op-ed, initiated the nonprofit The Mountain Pact, has been signed by nearly 40 Colorado District 3 mountain town/city/county local elected officials asking Rep. Tipton to vote for the Great American Outdoors Act. For the full list, go to VailDaily.com/opinion.