

# The Mountain Pact Urges BLM to Prioritize Protection of Shared Public Lands

[arkvalleyvoice.com/the-mountain-pact-urges-blm-to-prioritize-protection-of-shared-public-lands/](https://arkvalleyvoice.com/the-mountain-pact-urges-blm-to-prioritize-protection-of-shared-public-lands/)

By Jan Wondra

May 24, 2023



View over the Arkansas River toward the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness. Photo EcoFlight.

## More than 80 Colorado Local Elected Officials Urge the Bureau of Land Management to Prioritize the Conservation of our Shared Public Lands

Ahead of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposed Public Land Rule public meeting in Golden, Colorado on Thursday, The Mountain Pact (an organization that works with local elected officials across the West including Chaffee County), released a letter, signed by more than 80 Colorado local elected officials urging the BLM to “prioritize the conservation of our shared public lands.”

“Last year we had over 120 local elected officials from western states call on the Biden administration to protect more Bureau of Land Management lands as part of the administration’s America the Beautiful initiative,” said The Mountain Pact Executive Director Anna Peterson. “Now, over 80 Colorado local elected officials are responding and looking

forward to the BLM using this Public Lands Rule process to conserve and protect our nation's important public lands, wildlife and waters in tandem with locally-led efforts to advance conservation across the West.”

The letter is in response to a March 30 announcement from the Department of Interior of a draft “Public Lands Rule which lays the groundwork for conserving wildlife habitat, restoring places impacted by wildfire and drought, expanding outdoor recreation, and thoughtful development.”

“As local elected officials in Colorado, we would like to express our commitment to protecting these (BLM) landscapes which provide so much to our communities,” read the letter. “We commend BLM on recent agency guidance that prioritizes the health of public lands and encourage the BLM to continue to place conservation at the forefront of the rulemaking.”

“When used wisely, the Bureau of Land Management conservation mechanisms will support our local economies, tourism, and outdoor recreation as well as provide certainty for our rural and gateway communities so we can make long-term investments,” commented Chaffee County Commissioner Keith Baker. “We look forward to this rule-making process and modernizing management policies to allow for increased recreational opportunities and access to nature.”

Colorado State Representative HD 40 Naquetta Ricks had the following comment: “My colleagues from across the state and I strongly encourage the BLM to use all the tools they have to protect public lands across the state. In particular, we encourage the BLM to designate new Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).”

“The BLM has the authority to ensure that lands with wilderness character are administratively protected as WSAs,” she added. “These areas are often the first to be identified by our congressional leaders for legislative designation as wilderness and for many of our communities these are the iconic landscapes that define our state.”



The Arkansas Hills to the east of Salida and Tenderfoot Mountain were a potential target of development if the BLM “preferred” plan D (allowing mining development) had been selected during the Trump years.

Photo EcoFlight.

“The BLM’s mission is “to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations,” said Pitkin County Commissioner Greg Poschman. “For years BLM has prioritized extractive uses like oil and gas development while largely overlooking sustaining the health and diversity of BLM lands. It’s time for that to change.”

The Chair of the La Plata County, Colorado Board of County Commissioners Marsha Porter-Norton summed it up by saying “I and the over 80 fellow Colorado local elected officials look forward to the BLM prioritizing the conservation of our shared public lands and strongly encourage the BLM rulemaking to emphasize ecological integrity, preservation of vulnerable resources, and maintaining access to outdoor recreation. These efforts at the national level will positively impact BLM lands in our communities and across Colorado.”

The comment period for the proposed BLM draft Public Land Rules runs through June 20. The upcoming meeting in Golden is the second of five meetings, and it will include detailed information. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions to get a deeper understanding of the proposal.

Meeting Details: From 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thursday, May 25 at the Denver West Marriott,  
1717 Denver West Blvd, Golden, Colorado.