



COLORADO OUTDOOR RECREATION & ECONOMY ACT

Frequently Asked Questions about the CORE Act

Q: Does the CORE Act ban all motorized use on 400,000 acres in Colorado? Is it a 400,000 acre wilderness bill?

No. Of the roughly 400,000 acres in the CORE Act, over half of it is a federal mineral withdrawal, which has no effect or limitation on any uses in the area except for the prohibition of future oil and gas leasing. Less than a quarter of the acreage, around 73,000 acres, is wilderness, and much of that is the expansion of existing wilderness areas.

Q: Does the CORE Act close roads or trails that are currently open to motorized use?

The CORE Act does not close any existing roads, jeep trails, off highway vehicle trails or motorcycle trails. Claims that the CORE Act will close roads on Ophir Pass, Imogene Pass or the roads to Yankee Boy Basin and Holy Cross City are inaccurate. In developing the legislation, we coordinated closely with motorized users to remove from the proposal all motorized trails that a new designation could affect. Motorized trails that are unaffected include some of the state's finest snowmobile trails on Kebler Pass and the Sunlight to Powderhorn (SP) Trail.

Q: Will any groomed snowmobile trail networks be closed to usage?

The CORE Act does not close any groomed snowmobile trails. There are groomed trails within the Thompson Divide portion of the CORE Act, but the designations for the

Thompson Divide do not affect snowmobiling or other motorized uses. Summer and winter motorized users have been part of [the diverse coalition that supports the Thompson Divide legislation.](#)

Q: Will the trail buffers (i.e., the distance between the new proposed wilderness boundaries and existing trails and roads) be adequate to maintain existing trails outside of the wilderness areas?

The proposed boundaries of the wilderness and special management areas in the bill were crafted to protect the existing motorized and mechanized road and trail uses, with the trails being located outside of any proposed area that could restrict its use. The CORE Act uses the wilderness buffer distance recommendations from the US Forest Service, which have been used for wilderness bills in Colorado since 1993. This allows for a full range of uses on the trails near the wilderness areas, including motorized use. These buffers will accommodate maintenance on the trails to ensure they can stay open and maintained. The Forest Service is not aware of any lost motorized access from the use of these buffer distances in Colorado. Similarly, we have not received information that suggests motorized use has been lost as a result of these recommended buffer distances.

Q: Will the CORE Act limit motorized use at the proposed Camp Hale National Historic Landscape?

The CORE Act does not prohibit or in any way limit motorized use at Camp Hale. Instead, the bill specifically directs the Forest Service to manage the area for road and trail-based recreation, including snowmobiling, as part of the future management of the area. The Forest Service would continue to have the discretion to decide what roads and trails are open to motorized and non-motorized use.

Q: How were the areas proposed for designation under the bill chosen? Did you consult with the motorized community?

The areas in this legislation were all developed after we received formal written requests from the county commissions in the areas requesting legislation. All of the relevant stakeholders were consulted in the development of the legislation and, over the course of many years, thousands of acres of potential designations were removed from consideration at the request of the motorized community.

Q. Aren't the areas being designated in this bill places that Congress previously removed for consideration as wilderness?

No. Congress has not removed any acreage in this bill from consideration for wilderness. While some have inaccurately pointed to the 1980 Colorado Wilderness bill as precluding future wilderness designations, Colorado Senator Will Armstrong (R) noted at the time that the roadless review language used in section 107 of that bill does not mean the opportunity for wilderness designation would be foreclosed in the future. This sentiment was enshrined on page 23 of the Committee Report for the 1980 Colorado Wilderness Bill, which stated: "The decision to not designate these areas as wilderness is made on the basis of the circumstances and information presented to the Committee and is not irreversible. The Committee expects that the Forest Service under established laws, regulations, and policies, will continue to examine the full range of management options in the preparation and revision of management plans for these areas. If the Forest Service determines in the future that circumstances warrant the designation of these areas as wilderness, new recommendations may be made to Congress" and "[t]he language of section 5 does not prescribe any particular type of management for the lands involved..." Congress has designated a number of new wilderness areas in Colorado since 1980.

Grazing

Q: Does this bill prohibit grazing in the newly designated areas?

The CORE Act does not prohibit continued grazing in the areas proposed for wilderness, special management designation or mineral withdrawal. Consistent with earlier wilderness designations in Colorado and elsewhere, the CORE Act provides for the continued grazing of livestock in wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Act and Congressional Grazing Guidelines. Grazing can also continue in all of the other special management designations proposed in the bill. The Thompson Divide provisions were requested in part by local ranchers and grazers and will protect the quality of existing grazing and agricultural uses in the region.

Forestry

Does this bill limit the Forest Service's ability to manage our forests or fight wildfires?

The bill explicitly allows the Forest Service to carry out activities that it determines to be necessary to control the spread of insect and disease outbreaks in the proposed Wilderness Areas, as provided under the Wilderness Act. It also allows the Forest Service to carry out any activity it determines to be necessary, including the use of aircraft to fight wildfires in proposed Wilderness areas. Similar language has been included in earlier wilderness bills in Colorado that have passed into law, such as the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act in 2014. The special management areas have even broader forest and wildfire management provisions.

Water Rights

Are water rights protected in this legislation?

Yes, the bill protects existing water rights. The bill includes "headwaters language" to protect any water rights, water resources, or facilities that exist in areas designated as wilderness by the bill. The headwaters language was first used in the 1993 Colorado Wilderness Act. At the request of water community leaders, Congress has included the headwaters language in every Colorado wilderness designation bill passed since 1993, including the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act in 2014. Similarly, the special management areas would protect water rights. In whole, the bill will significantly enhance key watersheds and the quality water they provide to water users locally and across the state. The bill was developed in close consultation with and enjoys strong support from an array of water users and providers.