

Aug. 26, 2011

TO:

CO Governor John Hickenlooper
Sen. Mark Udall
Sen. Michael Bennet
Rep. Diana DeGette
Rep. Jared Polis
Rep. Scott Tipton
Rep. Cory Gardner
Rep. Doug Lanborn
Rep. Mike Coffman
Rep. Ed Perlmutter

Dear Colorado Senators, Representatives and Governor Hickenlooper:

As representatives of Colorado hunting and fishing conservation organizations, we are writing in opposition to H.R. 1581 and S. 1087, the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act of 2011. This harmful legislation not only would eliminate the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, it would prevent the U.S. Forest Service and state of Colorado from completing the state-based Colorado roadless rule. The result would be the removal of important conservation measures from millions of acres of world-class public-lands fish and wildlife habitat in Colorado. Sportsmen need your active support to thwart this legislation.

Since 2006, hunters and anglers have been engaged in strengthening and improving the proposed Colorado roadless rule. Sportsmen have been working diligently to develop a balanced rule that conserves roadless areas while protecting communities from catastrophic wildfire. If passed, the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act could eliminate the Colorado roadless rule and throw away years of stakeholder involvement while opening up millions of acres of backcountry public lands to development. This top-down legislation ignores science, undermines collaborative efforts and threatens Colorado's public-lands hunting and fishing heritage.

Colorado's 4.2 million acres of national forest backcountry provide unique opportunities for sportsmen from across the country to pursue fish and game. Colorado has more elk and mule deer than any other state in the nation, with more than 214,000 hunters pursuing these two species in 2010. Core habitat areas, with fewer disturbances to wildlife, have been shown to maintain higher reproduction and survival rates in elk and allow wildlife managers to maintain strong and harvestable wildlife populations.

Likewise, the last remaining populations of native cutthroat trout in Colorado depend heavily on backcountry areas for cool, clean water and intact spawning habitat. Backcountry lands in Colorado account for 76 percent of current greenback cutthroat trout habitat, 71 percent of current Colorado River cutthroat trout habitat and 58 percent of current Rio Grande cutthroat trout habitat.

Sportsmen urge you to oppose H.R. 1581 and S. 1087. This legislation is an affront to a long-standing public process and our outdoor heritage. We look forward to continued opportunities to work together in support of America's public lands and sporting traditions.

Sincerely,

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Holly Endersby, Conservation Director

Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance
Tim Mauk, Co-Director

Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
David Lien, Vice-Chair

Colorado Trout Unlimited
David Nickum, Executive Director

Colorado Wildlife Federation
Suzanne O'Neill, Executive Director

National Wildlife Federation
John Gale, Regional Representative

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Joel Webster, Director for the Center for Western Lands

Western Native Trout Initiative
Robin Knox, Coordinator