



# Wild Connections

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PRAIRIES

Protecting and restoring wildlands in the Arkansas and South Platte watersheds...



## Wild Connections News

March 2019

Hi {FIRST\_NAME} to all our friends,

As we transition into spring and daylight savings, things are picking up on our local public lands! Take a look below...

### Say No to Mining at Grape Creek Proposed Wilderness!

#### Colorado State Land Board Meeting

Thursday, March 14, 2019

8:00 AM to 10:00 AM (Estimated Times)

1127 Sherman St, Denver, CO

The Colorado State Land Board (SLB) has decided to recommend allowing mining on the Grape Creek-Horseshoe Mountain State Stewardship Trust parcel, part of the Grape Creek proposed Wilderness, just southwest of Cañon City.

**The SLB designated this Stewardship Trust parcel in 1998, nominated by strong supporters, Wild Connections and The Sierra Club.** Under State Land Board policy, the Director *"shall review and evaluate whether the new use will adversely affect the natural values of the property."*



SLB Stewardship Trust Land allows *"only those uses that will protect and enhance the beauty, natural values, open space and wildlife habitat of those lands,"* except for pre-existing uses or management practices.

Grape Creek's pristine waters and downstream water supplies, including the Arkansas River, are at risk from mining activity. Mining for gold and other minerals is not compatible with sound stewardship of this land. Through the processes of mapping, surface sampling, ground exploration, drilling, and, if the mining is approved, road building, tunneling, and massive mine waste disposal, there is no way that the land's identified natural values can survive.

The Colorado State Land Board has put this item on their Thursday, March, 14, 2019 meeting agenda in Denver. The meeting will begin at 8:00 AM, however the discussion of the mining lease at Grape Creek will likely start between 9:00 and 9:30 AM.

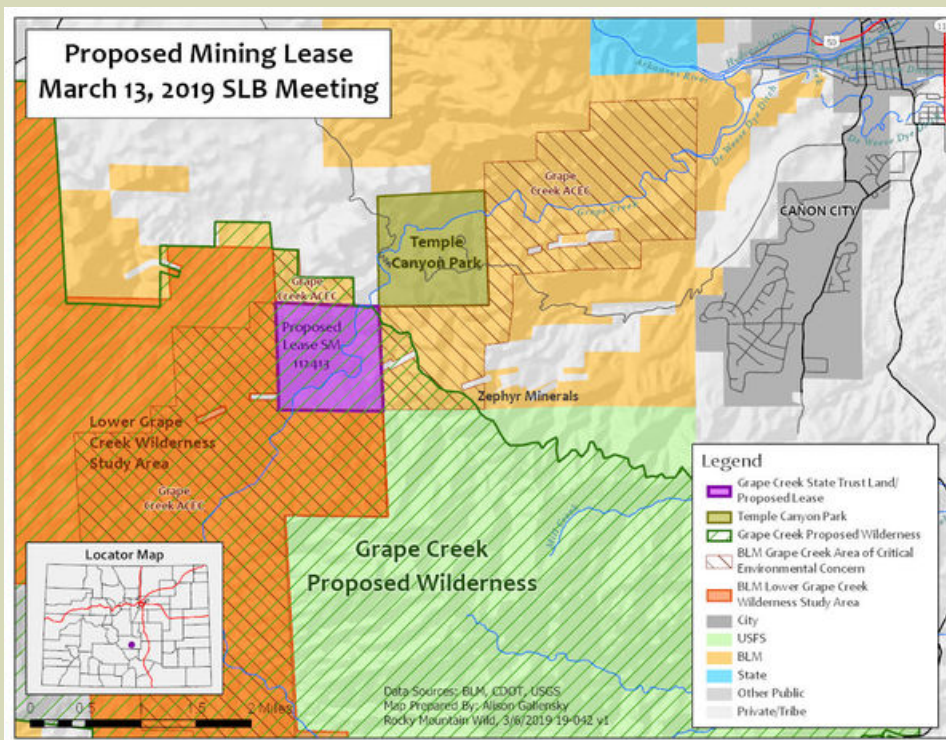
**We need you to attend this meeting!** Tell the Colorado State Land Board that this important wildlife area and watershed needs to be protected! There is no advance registration required. Please be on time and sign-in. The meeting agenda has more details about the proposed mineral lease at Grape Creek: [here](#).

The Grape Creek - Horseshoe Mountain Stewardship Trust Parcel has many characteristics worthy of protection and is within a greater landscape of wildlife habitat, designations, and proposals.

- Located within [BLM's Grape Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern](#), "a corridor of significant natural character with unique high desert riparian resources, scenic and visual qualities, along with significant flora and fauna values."
- Located within the 35,535-acre Grape Creek Proposed Wilderness, part of Congresswoman Diana DeGette's [2018 Colorado Wilderness Act](#), and states "Grape Creek is a secluded and serene body of water that flows into the Wet Mountain Valley of southern Colorado. This creek is responsible for nearly all the snowmelt that comes through this valley, creating a lush habitat with diverse vegetation and wildlife... These factors create a pristine environment that is a haven for both fish and fisherman alike, a true example of sustainable Colorado recreation."
- Located within [Colorado Natural Heritage Program's Grape Creek Potential Conservation Area](#), which has a very high biodiversity significance for "encompassing an excellent and a good occurrence of a globally imperiled riparian natural community, narrowleaf cottonwood - Rocky Mountain juniper woodland. Additionally, there is a good occurrence of the globally vulnerable narrowleaf cottonwood - Douglas-fir woodland and a good to fair occurrence of the apparently globally secure but state imperiled Rocky Mountain juniper / Red-osier dogwood woodland. Several fair occurrences of a globally imperiled plant, Arkansas Canyon stickleaf (*Nuttallia densa*), have also been documented."
- Adjacent to BLM's 21,400-acre [Grape Creek Wilderness Study Area](#) on three sides, which "varies from rocky, rolling hills to steep, rugged canyons and mountains. The predominant feature is Horseshoe Mountain".
- This area contains high habitat and range for several wildlife species, including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, black bear, mule deer, mountain lion, various small mammals, trout, and various species of raptors, including bald eagles.

For more information and talking points, see [www.wildconnections.org](http://www.wildconnections.org).

Thanks [Rocky Mountain Wild](#) for the below map and [Grape Creek](#) blogpost!



### Meet Your New Colorado BLM State Director

The Bureau of Land Management is hosting an open house to meet our new Colorado BLM State Director, Jamie Connell.



**Wednesday, March 13, 2019 (3:30 PM to 5:00 PM)**

**BLM Colorado State Office**

**2850 Youngsfield Street, Lakewood, CO 80215**

For questions or more info, please contact Kirby-Lynn Shedlowski at [kshedlowski@blm.gov](mailto:kshedlowski@blm.gov)

Wild Connections' Board President, Jim Lockhart, Vice President, John Stansfield, and Conservation Director, John Sztukowski, [met Jamie Connell at their Cañon City open house](#) recently and spoke about important local BLM public lands issues like the BLM Colorado Resource Advisory Councils and BLM's Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan Revision.



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### **USFS Seeking Public Input for Southern Shooting Partnership**

The US Forest Service is a partner in the Southern Shooting Partnership (SSP), and is asking for public participation in an online survey and in a series of public meetings. The Partnership is asking for public input on the topic of target shooting (not hunting) on public lands.

If you are a recreational shooter or live adjacent to or recreate on public lands where recreation shooting occurs, consider completing the below survey or attending the below meeting.

**Tuesday, March 19, 2019 (7:00 PM to 9:00 PM)**

**Pikes Peak Community Club Center**

**11122 US-24, Divide, CO 80814**

**The survey is open through March 15, 2019.** Find the **Southern Shooting Partnership online survey** and more info [here](#).

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### **Register Now!**

**Refrigerator Gulch Climate Education Backpack,**

**A Pike National Forest Wilderness Outing**

**Tuesday, June 18, 2019 - Wednesday, June 19, 2019**

**Meeting 9:00 AM from Wigwam Trailhead**

Join Wild Connections for our first ever climate backpack in Refrigerator Gulch in the Lost Creek Wilderness. This outing is located in the high elevation of Pike National Forest, southwest of Deckers, just over an hour from southwest Denver or Colorado Springs.

This moderately strenuous overnight backpack hike will cover approximately 15 miles, with 2000 feet of elevation gain. This hike begins at the Wigwam Creek trailhead and ascends Wigwam Creek and a tributary drainage, then descends 1000 feet to Refrigerator Gulch where we will camp for the night. Day 2 we will return the way we came. Prior backpacking experience is required. No heavy packs >30 lbs (not counting water) please as we will move at a moderate pace.



We will also enjoy great views of Wigwam Park and Peak and of the amazing jumbled topography of the Lost Creek Wilderness. As a special feature of this hike, we will study how the heavily dissected topography of this area lends itself to cold air pools that scientists are identifying as wildlife and native plant refugia and climate corridors. We will record microclimate temperature changes in differing topography locations and photograph the corresponding plant life on a citizen science app for smartphones. On day 2, we will return, taking additional measurements. Cold air pools serve not only as areas where plants and animals may persist in a warmer, drier climate, but also as climate corridors where they may migrate northerly or altitudinally.

Participants should bring 2 lunches, one dinner, one breakfast and snacks, the ten essentials including water treatment, lightweight camping gear and extra clothing, comfortable hiking footwear and raingear.

This hike is co-sponsored by Wild Connections and the Colorado Mountain Club. For more information or to sign up, contact Wild Connections' Board Member, Karl Ford at [earthford@aol.com](mailto:earthford@aol.com). Carpools will leave Denver and Colorado Springs or meet at the trailhead at 9:00 AM on June 18.

## South Park Alpine Restoration Projects are Back!

In the summer of 2018, Wild Connections, along with long-time partners, USFS South Park Ranger District, Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative (MRHI), and Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV), completed two large South Park Alpine restoration projects, in a series of South Park restoration projects that will continue into 2019.

Registration is now open for two of our 2019 South Park Alpine Restoration Projects!

### Sheep Creek - Road Removal

**Saturday, July 20, 2019 - Sunday, July 21, 2019**

For more information and to register for the Sheep Creek Restoration Project, visit WRV's page [here](#).



### Beaver Creek - Trail & Boardwalk

**Friday, Aug 16, 2019 - Sunday, Aug 28, 2019**

For more information and to register for the Beaver Creek Trails Project, visit WRV's page [here](#).

## Share Wild Connections' GoFundMe Page!



Please take a look at [Wild Connections GoFundMe page](#) and share on your social media networks.

These funds will go directly towards a crucial project of climate change science research on our local public lands, how climate change may affect local flora and fauna, and what we can do to protect vulnerable species and wildlife corridors in the face of a changing landscape due to climate.

This is in coordination with our [Wild Connections Conservation Plan Revision](#).

Share on your social media platforms:

[See Wild Connections GoFundMe Page here.](#)

## Can You Help Wild Connections?

Wild Connections is seeking to **contract with a newsletter editor** to produce Landscapes, Wild Connections' in-depth journal style newsletter, published twice a year in print and online. Tasks would include developing articles, layout, coordination with article authors and copy editor, and submission of finalized newsletter to the printer. The newsletter is typically produced in June and November. For more information, contact Wild Connections' Board President, Jim Lockhart, at [jlock@datawest.net](mailto:jlock@datawest.net).

Wild Connections is also seeking a **volunteer videographer** to help produce a short video. If interested, please contact Wild Connections' Conservation Director, John Sztukowski, at [john@wildconnections.org](mailto:john@wildconnections.org).

*Jim, Misi, John, Kristin, Alison, Claude, Deb, Karl and John*

- All of us at Wild Connections

**Share with your friends and family**

[Forward this E-News to a friend](#)



Thanks for the photos! Credit from top to bottom:

*Thanks for the photos! Credit from top to bottom:  
EcoFlight (header), John Sztukowski, Rocky Mountain Wild (map),  
BLM RGFO, USFS, Misi Ballard, wikimedia.org*

Contact Us

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