



Wild Connections

FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PRAIRIES

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



Wild Connections News

March 2018

Hi {FIRST_NAME} to all our friends,

It's March 2018(!) and Wild Connections has a lot of news and updates to bring to you.

Join us for an Upcoming Outing...

Seep Springs, a BLM Wildlands Hike

Saturday, March 17, 2018

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Trailhead to Trailhead time)



Join us for a winter hike in the BLM Seep Springs area of the Gold Belt proposed Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), just west of Cañon City. This easy-to-moderate in-and-out 6 mile hike follows a designated multi-use trail with about 500 feet elevation gain and offers great views of BLM's rugged historic Gold Belt region as well as the Sangre de Cristo and Wet Mountain ranges to the south.

This trip is sponsored by Wild Connections, Pikes Peak Group Sierra Club, and Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition. Learn about this landscape, its inhabitants, and about BLM's ongoing Resource Management Plan revision. Bring lunch, snacks, water, layered clothing, suitable boots suitable for hiking and possible snow, and your other hiking essentials.

This is also a dog friendly hike for hike friendly dogs. Dogs, on-leash, are welcome.

Maximum 15 participants. For more trip and carpool information and to register, contact John Sztukowski, 817-939-4239 or e-mail john@wildconnections.org.

Grape Creek at Ecology Park, a BLM Wildlands Hike

Saturday, March 31, 2018

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m (Trailhead to Trailhead time)

Ecology Park, an area near Cañon City and south of Royal Gorge, which is jointly managed between the BLM and Fremont County, offers hiking trails and access to Grape Creek and Temple Canyon.

We will explore the area along Grape Creek in Ecology Park and adjoining BLM wild



lands. We will learn about the BLM's Resource Management Plan revision, and how it could affect the area, and also about Ecology Park, a landfill restored for hiking, mountain biking, and other non-motorized recreation.

This hike, sponsored by Pikes Peak Group Sierra Club, Wild Connections, and Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, is rated moderate because a portion of it is off-trail along a stream bottom, with some easy climbing over obstacles.

Bring lunch, snacks, water, clothing suitable for the weather conditions, and footwear suitable for moderate off-trail hiking. An optional carpool from Colorado Springs will be arranged



Maximum 15 participants. For more information or to register for the hike, contact Jim Lockhart at [719-385-0045](tel:719-385-0045) or jlock@datawest.net.

Cottonwood Creek, a BLM Wildlands Hike

Saturday, April 7, 2018

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Trailhead to Trailhead time)



Cottonwood Creek near Crampton Mountain is a lush perennial drainage that meanders along Cottonwood Ridge, tucked into the hills near the Tallahassee Creek Valley north of Table Mountain and the Arkansas River Canyonlands. This easy-to-moderate hike of five miles round-trip and approximately 500 feet elevation gain follows a rarely used BLM non-motorized trail over a ridge and into the beautiful Cottonwood Creek drainage, closed in by steep ridges and dense mixed forests. The majority of the trail is an elevated old roadbed above the creek, which is now revegetated. There will also be a couple fairly easy creek crossings.

Learn about BLM Lands with Wilderness Characteristics and BLM's Resource Management Plan revision currently in progress. Bring lunch, snacks, water, suitable clothing, boots suitable for off-trail hiking, water crossings, and possible snow, and other

standard hiking essentials. This trip is sponsored by Wild Connections, Pikes Peak Group Sierra Club, and Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition.

Maximum 15 participants. For more trip and carpool information and to register, contact John Sztukowski, 817-939-4239 or e-mail john@wildconnections.org by 5:00 PM.

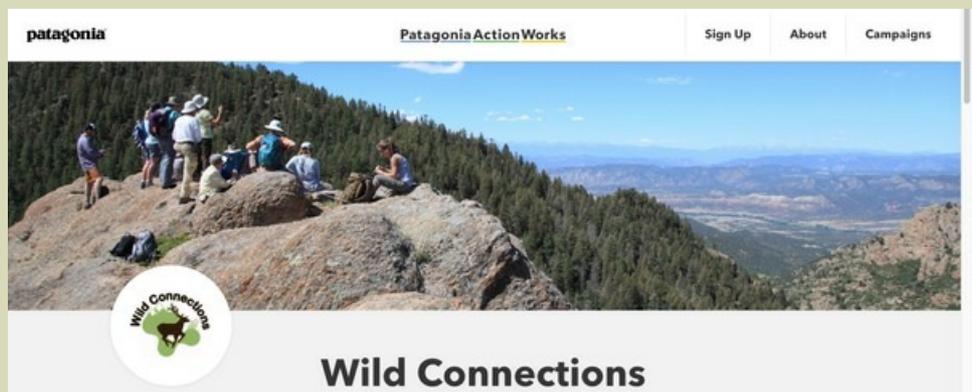
Introducing Patagonia Action Works

Wild Connections is honored to be a proud Patagonia grantee and thanks Patagonia for their strong support over many years.

We are excited to be a part of Patagonia's new platform to fight for the planet, Patagonia Action Works, which just officially launched this past month. Patagonia Action Works was built to help Patagonia customers learn more about local environmental issues and ways to get involved with events, petitions, fundraising and volunteering time and skills.

The hope is that Patagonia Action Works will foster meaningful, long-lasting collaboration and strong, diverse coalitions. The goal is to harness the energy in our community and maximize efforts to protect the places and people we need and love.

Patagonia Action Works makes it easy for conservation organizations like Wild Connections to connect with Patagonia customers looking to get involved with local environmental issues.



Check out Wild Connections' Patagonia Action Works' page (right) at: <https://www.patagonia.com/actionworks/grantees/wild-connections/>

Take Action...

Protect our National Monuments

Rep. Rob Bishop (UT) introduced a bill that proposes to gut the Antiquities Act and our National Monuments. H.R. 3990, "To amend title 54, United States Code, to reform the Antiquities Act of 1906, and for other purposes," is ironically entitled the 'National Monument Creation and Protection Act.' This bill would radically undermine a conservation legacy sustained by 16 Republican and Democratic presidents. The bill is co-sponsored by rep. Doug Lamborn, CO District 5.

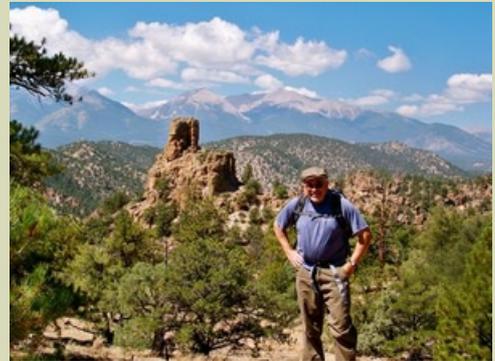
This bill would, among other drastic proposals:

- Limit the Antiquities Act to "object or objects of antiquity." These are defined narrowly and exclude geographic features and natural objects;
- Create arbitrary size limitations for monuments and rules for each, including requiring that monuments be at least 50 miles apart and that the local county, legislature, and Governor approve monuments over 10,000 acres, and prohibiting all monuments over 85,000 acres;
- Give the President authority to reduce and eliminate enormous swaths of established National Monuments (authority the President does not currently have!);
- Prohibit National Monuments to protect out oceans.

This bill would cripple the National Monument system. Under the new restrictions it proposes, many of Colorado's public lands would not have been protected,

including **Browns Canyon** (right), **Dinosaur National Monument**, **Canyons of the**

Ancients, and **Great Sand Dunes**, as well as many incredible national parks that were first protected as monuments (Grand Canyon, Zion).



Suggested Talking Points for your call or e-mail

"Hi, my name is _____, and I live in _____, Colorado. I am calling to ask [Rep. or Sen. _____] to vote NO on HR 3990, the National Monument Creation and Protection Act. This bill would undermine a decades-old bipartisan conservation legacy by gutting the Antiquities Act, which has been used by 8 Republican and 8 Democratic Presidents to preserve many of this country's and Colorado's most cherished natural, cultural, and historical treasures. Please tell [Rep. or Sen. _____] to stand with Coloradans and protect our National Monuments by voting NO on HR 3990. Thank you for your time."

Contacts

Rep Lamborn:

- D.C. Phone: [202-225-4422](tel:202-225-4422)
- Colorado Springs: [719-520-0055](tel:719-520-0055)
- <https://lamborn.house.gov/contact/>

Rep Tipton:

- D.C. Phone: [202-225-4761](tel:202-225-4761)
- Pueblo Phone: [719-542-1073](tel:719-542-1073)
- <https://tipton.house.gov/>

Sen Bennett:

- D.C. Phone: [202-224-5852](tel:202-224-5852)
- <https://www.bennet.senate.gov/?p=contact>

Sen Gardner:

- D.C. Phone: [202-224-5941](tel:202-224-5941)

Noteworthy News...

BLM Ends Master Leasing Plans and Other Energy Reform Rollbacks

Last month, the BLM formally did away with Master Leasing Plans (MLPs), along with the rest of their 2010 leasing reforms. **This includes South Park's Master Leasing Plan that was nested within BLM Royal Gorge Field Office's Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (ECRMP) revision.**

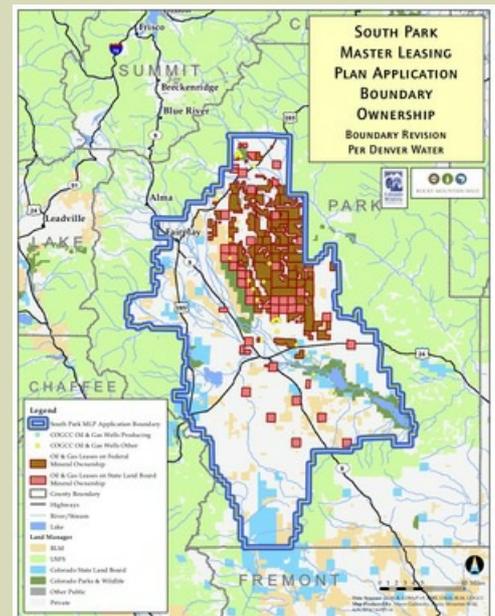
The Master Leasing Plan policy was a common-sense approach to lands management put in place to protect our national parks and public lands from drilling and restore balance across our landscapes consistent with BLM's multiple-use mission.

Master Leasing Plans have had broad support from communities across the West and have created certainty for all users of public lands and were helping to direct oil and gas drilling away from our parks, hiking trails, and other important resources.

MLPs, including the South Park Master Leasing Plan, allowed stakeholders like Wild Connections to work together to create landscape-level plans aimed to protect outdoor recreation opportunities and providing economic certainty to local businesses and all industries that benefit from public lands.

The South Park MLP was formed to protect the South Park National Heritage Area that "is remarkable not only for its wealth of natural and cultural resources, but as a place that continues to embody the Western frontier." This area is rich in wildlife and plant life, including three rare species found nowhere else in the world. The South Park MLP also aimed to protect South Platte's watershed, which not only offers 54 miles of gold medal trout fishing waters, which brings in nearly \$13 million alone to Park County, but provides valuable drinking water for Denver, Aurora, Colorado Springs, and Park County residents.

Instead of upholding successful policy, Secretary Zinke and the Trump administration have turned their back and have chosen to side with their friends in the oil and gas industry, rubber-stamping their "energy dominance" agenda at the expense of outdoor recreation opportunities - like hunting and fishing - and drinking water protections for Western communities. By allowing this unwanted and unwarranted change, Washington is trading the West's economic well-being and future generation's outdoor heritage for uncertainty and conflict - something nobody, including industry, wants.



For more information on this, BLM's IM 2018-034 can be found here: <https://www.blm.gov/policy/im-2018-034>.

Zinke signs Secretarial Order on Wildlife Corridors

Last week, Secretary Zinke signed Secretarial Order 3362, which takes certain steps to enhance the conservation of winter habitat and migration corridor habitat on federal lands.

Specifically, it gives explicit direction to Interior agencies for "minimal development that would fragment winter range and... corridors," as well as "limit disturbance of big game on winter range" and utilize other actions available to "conserve and/or restore the vital big game winter range and migration corridors across the west."

Overall, this looks like a positive step towards advancing science and policy on wildlife migrations. Across the West, many wildlife populations depend on the ability to travel between summer and winter habitats. We are realizing more and more that the areas that connect these habitats are critically important in maintaining healthy populations of deer, elk, and other large game animals.



More info can be found at:

<https://www.denverpost.com/2018/02/03/animal-wildlife-crossings/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/23/opinion/protecting-americas-animal-migrations.html>

Colorado BLM RAC members send letter to Secretary Zinke

Last week, 23 members of the Colorado BLM Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) signed and delivered a letter to Secretary Zinke in frustration that RACs are still effectively barred from meeting (due to lapsed charters).

RAC members, comprised of local community members representing balanced and diverse constituencies, have official roles as stakeholder advisers to the BLM, and provide valuable input on behalf of communities affected by BLM public land management decisions.

Two of Colorado's three main BLM RACs have been unable to meet for over a year, including the Rocky Mountain RAC, which has provided integral insight and should continue to provide valuable input on BLM Royal Gorge Field Office's (RGFO) Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan (ECRMP) revision and other pressing issues affecting public lands in the region.

These RAC members expressed that they "are dismayed and have begun to feel disenfranchised by a system that values process over outcome." The hope is "that the Department of Interior will recognize the importance of the resource advisory councils and act swiftly to restore their proper and regular function in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)."

Seeking Volunteers...

For all the work that Wild Connections achieves, we are primarily supported by a volunteer board and members and are always seeking additional volunteers to sharpen our organizational aspects and help us grow.

Currently, Wild Connections could assuredly use volunteer assistance with regard to social media, videography, and publication. Or if you have another unique skill that you would be willing to donate to our cause, please contact Wild Connections' Wildlands Conservation Coordinator, John Sztukowski, at john@wildconnections.org or 817-939-4239.

Jim, Misi, John, Kristin, Alison, Claude, Deb, Karl and John
- All of us at Wild Connections

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*Thanks for the photos! Credit from top to bottom:
Kate Spinelli (header), John Sztukowski, Wild Connections, John Sztukowski,
Patagonia/Kate Spinelli, John Stansfield, Alison Gallensky RMW (map), John Sztukowski,*

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