

Wildlife ≈ Wildlands ≈ Wild Connections

Wild areas - designated Wilderness and roadless lands - are the core of a wildlands network. Volunteers take on the detailed work of identifying roadless areas on both USFS and BLM lands, and they protect selected areas through habitat restoration projects.

Roadless Area Inventories conducted by trained volunteer mappers since 1995 identified 1.2 million acres of wild roadless land on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest. As a result 107,400 acres were added to the Forest Service inventory during the Colorado Roadless Rule process.

Starting in 2014 mappers found 246,000 roadless acres on BLM lands. BLM reviewed our detailed reports and increased their official inventory from 77,000 acres to 183,000 acres.

Habitat restoration projects demonstrate the positive effects of on-the-ground protection. Volunteers from Wild Connections and partner groups work with the Forest Service to bring degraded areas back to more natural conditions.

Restoration techniques vary. Fence and cable barriers or boulders may be installed to prevent illegal off-road motorized travel. Mechanically scarifying routes, hand raking and spreading native seeds help recover vegetation. Placing erosion mat, large logs and brush protect the seeds and prevent motorized travel.



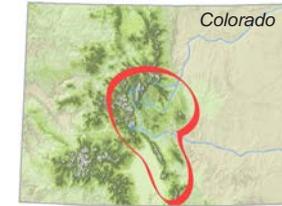
*Dave W – landowner near the Farnum project
“Huge dividends for wildlife – in 17 years we have never seen so many elk, turkeys and grouse!”*

Annual monitoring trips track progress and determine future action.

Photos: Cover - Selkirk work day team, Misi Ballard; Lynx kitten, Colorado Parks and Wildlife; 31 Mile Mountain elk, John Sztukowski. Above - Cucharas Canyon, Wild Connections; Packer Gulch team thank you, John Sztukowski.

Our Work

Wild Connections protects and restores wild nature on U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands in the watersheds of the Arkansas and South Platte Rivers.



Connecting Wildernesses and roadless areas in a landscape-wide wildlands network across the central Rockies benefits migratory animals, rare plant communities, clean water sources for urban and mountain communities, local economies, quiet recreation, historic and cultural locations, scenic vistas and spiritual values.

Our public lands are under attack from special interests who want to use wild areas for activities that harm the land. However, we are determined to preserve these natural wonders for now and the future.

Wild Connections engages people in practical actions that lead to positive change. Volunteers close illegal motorized routes so that wildlife can thrive in quiet reconnected places. We're active in the decision-making for better management of public lands. We lead backcountry hikes and educational events to show how everyone can make a difference.

You are at the heart of our mission. We welcome your inquiries and comments.



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Reclaiming Wildways

protecting and restoring wild nature on public lands in the Arkansas and South Platte watersheds



Wildlife and Wildlands

Wildways are networks of roadless or lightly developed public and private lands. Restoration projects that improve wildlife habitat, close illegal motorized routes and provide connections between roadless areas make the wildway more effective. The facing map shows project locations.

Trout and Eagle Creeks 2009-2010

Located on the Rampart Range southwest of Denver, Trout and Eagle Creeks are tributaries to the South Platte River that provide critical habitat for two threatened species, the Pawnee montane skipper butterfly and Preble's meadow jumping mouse. Severe erosion caused by previous motorized use and the Hayman fire was reduced and 7.8 miles of illegal motorized tracks were eliminated, restoring important uplands, riparian and stream habitat.



Pawnee montane skipper on liatris flower. USFWS

Green Mountain 2011

Green Mountain Roadless Area is a rich mosaic of wild land connecting the Lost Creek Wilderness Area to the South Platte River corridor. It was damaged by illegal motorized activity, including the destruction of an important wet meadow, a haven for area wildlife. The project restored the 5-acre meadow to lush grasses and seasonal ponds, closed 3.5 miles of decommissioned roads and illegal off highway vehicle tracks, closed an abandoned mine-shaft and did a census of bats and Pawnee montane skipper butterflies. The quiet that wildlife need to thrive was re-established.



Wet meadow ready for seeding in 2011. Jean C. Smith



Monitoring team in the recovered grasses in 2017. John Stansfield

Geneva Creek 2013

Denuded dispersed campsites along Geneva Creek west of Mt. Evans Wilderness were scarified and reseeded. Felled trees and strategically placed boulders protect the streamside and meadows.



Boulders, logs and seeding. Jean C Smith

Selkirk Gulch 2016

The headwaters of North Tarryall Creek bubble out of Hoosier Ridge, north of Fairplay, and flow east through the Selkirk valley supporting a variety of year-round habitats for area wildlife. Closing 2.13 miles of illegal track protects wetlands and the tundra of Hoosier Ridge.



Mixing concrete for post and cable fence. Deb Overn

Farnum Peak 2015

Farnum and Schoolmarm Roadless Areas south of Lost Creek Wilderness provide important wintering and calving habitat and migration routes for area wildlife. An illegal 1.5 mile OHV track cutting through the middle of this critical wildlife corridor was closed on both east and west ends, reconnecting these wildlands for the benefit of area wildlife. Protecting critical wildlife habitat continued in 2017 by closing three illegal motorized tracks leading from Packer Gulch into the Farnum Roadless Area.

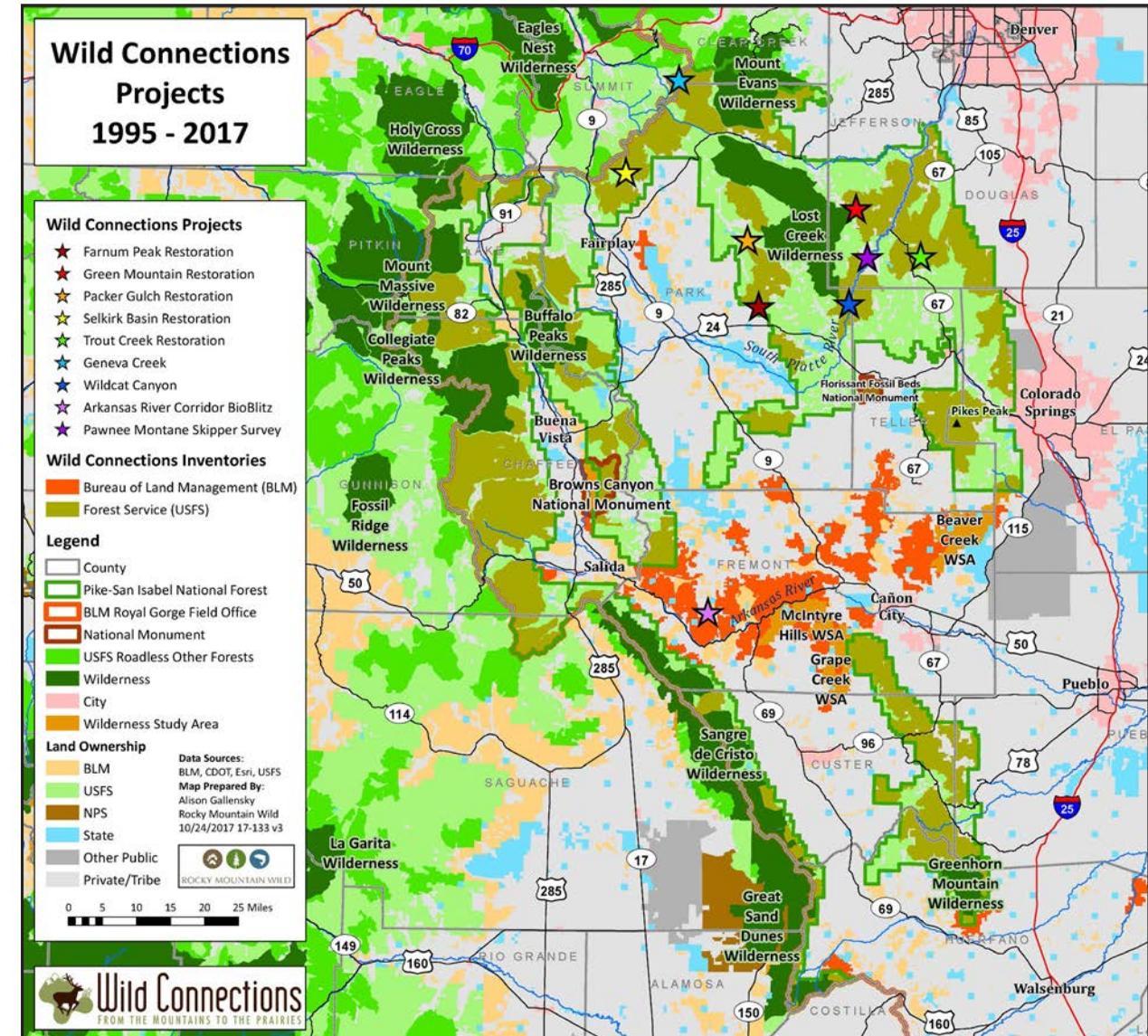


Elk browsing at the Farnum closure. Wild Connections

Wild Connections

From pre-settlement continuous grasslands, canyons and mountain ranges, central Colorado has changed into the complicated patterns of land ownership and multiple uses shown on this map*. However, the region still retains millions of acres of federal, state and county public lands available to all.

The challenge is to link these wildlands into a landscape-scale network. The *Wild Connections Conservation Plan (WCCP)** is our contribution to that effort. It incorporates Wilderness and roadless areas, locations of rare biodiversity and habitat for key species. All ecosystem types are represented and the WCCP has the potential to protect native species and the spectacular biodiversity of our region.



* See <http://wildconnections.org/projects.html> and <http://wildconnections.org/conservation/wccpconservationplan.html>