



July 3, 2024

Dear Colleague,

Happy Independence Day from Wild Connections! We hope you have a safe and enjoyable holiday. Fun Fact: [National Park Service reports](#) that the "America the Beautiful" poem by Katherine Lee Bates was inspired by a trip atop Pikes Peak in 1893, and was first published on July 4th, 1895!

And here is your regional conservation news and events for the rest of this month:

- Events
  - July 20: Ben Tyler Trail Hike, Rock Creek Project Monitoring
  - July 20: Homestake Valley Bioblitz, hosted by Wilderness Workshop
  - July 26-27: Royal Gorge Whitewater Festival
  - July 27-28: Burro Days in Fairplay
  - Aug 4: Pollinating Climate Action in Manitou Springs
- Regional Updates
  - New leadership at BLM Royal Gorge Field Office
  - CPW 'Species of Greatest Conservation Need' Planning
  - Forest Service National Old-Growth Forest Amendment
  - Bighorn Roundtable hiring for part-time Director Position
- Wild Connections Directors Log
  - June 7 QUC Buffalo Peaks Roadless Area Restoration Project
  - June 12 Strengthening Partnerships at Outside 285 Meeting
  - June 13 Environmental Achievements at Rebel With a Cause Gala
  - June 15 Exploring Kenosha: Signs of Ecological Revival
  - June 20-21 BLM Rocky Mountain RAC Meetings
  - Listening Sessions: Engaging with Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative
- Money Doesn't Grow on Trees...

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## EVENTS



*Viewing Beaver Ponds at WC's  
2020 Rock Creek Project  
Monitoring Hike. Photo John  
Stansfield*

[More Info Here!](#)

### **Ben Tyler Trail Hike, Rock Creek Project Monitor** **Saturday, July 20, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

We will start this 5 mile hike with about 800 ft total elevation gain on the Colorado trail, about a mile from the Ben Tyler trail, where we will pass and observe our 2018 Rock Creek Restoration Project, just outside the Lost Creek Wilderness. This successful project restored the lush stream banks along the tumbling Rock Creek after closing an illegal 4WD route used to access and damage the creek banks. The Forest Service plans to soon re-introduce the native Greenback Cutthroat Trout to Rock Creek!

We will have a Denver and Colorado Springs carpool. For more info and to register, contact Claude Neumann at 720-231-3039 or [claudeneumann@earthlink.net](mailto:claudeneumann@earthlink.net).



2023 Homestake Valley BioBlitz.  
Photo Wilderness Workshop.

[Register Here!](#)

### **Homestake Valley BioBlitz** **Saturday, July 20, 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

Our friends at Wilderness Workshop are hosting the [3rd annual Homestake Valley BioBlitz](#) to continue to build an inventory of plant species near the 10,000 years-old fens of Homestake Valley, near Minturn.

Join local scientists to better understand this special area that we are trying to protect from a proposed dam and reservoir, which would also reduce about 500 acres of the Holy Cross Wilderness.



### **Royal Gorge Whitewater Festival** **Friday, July 26 - Saturday, July 27**

Wild Connections will be tabling at the [15th Annual Royal Gorge Whitewater Festival](#), in Cañon City's Centennial Park!

Whether you come for the boating, the music, or the fun, make sure that you come say hello and see what we have been up to in this region.



### **Fairplay Burro Days** **Saturday, July 27 - Sunday, July 28**

You can also find us tabling once again at [Burro Days](#) in Fairplay! This is the 75th celebration of Burro Days, headlined by burro, llama and outhouse races!

Look for our table to find out about upcoming outings and restoration projects that we are scheduling in South Park later this summer and fall.

### **Pollinating Climate Action** **Sunday, August 4, 2:00 PM to 7:00 PM**



How does Climate Change Affect Pollinators? Photo Earth.org

We are coordinating with 350 Colorado, Manitou Pollinators and others to host an educational and fun event to learn what local organizations are working on with regard to native species, pollinators, conservation and climate action.

This will be held in conjunction with the Soda Springs Farmers Market in Manitou Springs at Soda Springs Park.

[RSVP Here!](#)

## **Regional Updates**



### **New Leadership at BLM Royal Gorge Field Office**

On June 26, [the BLM announced](#) that Doug Mayes is the new Field Manager at BLM's Royal Gorge Field Office. Doug has been with the BLM for seven years now, most recently as the Restoration Coordinator for BLM Wyoming.

Former Field Manager, Keith Berger, retired at the end of May. Wild Connections sent a note wishing him well in retirement and thanking him for his time with the BLM.



### **CPW Species of Greatest Conservation Need Public Feedback due July 9**

On June 12, [Colorado Parks and Wildlife announced](#) that they are seeking public feedback on their draft process to select the Species of Greatest Conservation Need, which will help determine species conservation priority in CPW's 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan.

CPW has more info, including their Feedback Form to submit comment, at [engagecpw.org/state-wildlife-action-plan](http://engagecpw.org/state-wildlife-action-plan).



### **FS National Old-Growth Forest Plan Amendment Comments due September 20**

Last week [the Forest Service announced](#) a 90-day public comment period for draft guidance on protecting mature and old-growth trees and forests, which will amend every FS forest plan in the country!

Our partners are putting together guidance for commenting. See [the group press release here](#). And [the FS has more info here](#), including a couple of short videos.



### **Bighorn Roundtable Hiring Part-time Director**

Wild Connections is excited to be part of the Bighorn Roundtable, a new collaboration of local, state and federal government agencies and recreation and conservation user groups formed to improve the resources in the Royal Gorge region.

The group is hiring a part-time Director to lead this collaboration! For more info, contact Kyle Horne at [khorne@ccrec.org](mailto:khorne@ccrec.org) or [\(719\) 275-1578](tel:(719)275-1578).





*QUC Salt Creek Restoration Project at FS Buffalo Peak RA. Photo John Sztukowski.*

### **June 7: QUC Buffalo Peaks RA Restoration Project**

We were happy to lend a hand at the Quiet Use Coalition's recent restoration project to assist the Forest Service in reclaiming FS route 435.4B at the Buffalo Peaks Roadless Area in South Park. We seeded, raked and dragged slash onto the decommissioned route, while the FS dug up and repurposed post and cable from a previous QUC project farther up the route.

Wild Connections also has a history of protecting the Buffalo Peaks Roadless Area. In 2018, we hosted a Salt Creek Fence Removal Project to improve local wildlife habitat.



### **June 12: Strengthening Partnerships at Outside 285**

India West, co-ED/fundraising, and Claude Neuman, board treasurer, attended the [Outside 285](#) Quarterly Partnership Meeting in Evergreen. [Mountain Area Land Trust](#) highlighted managing 96 Conservation Easements across Colorado's Front Range. Updates included trail improvements in Cheesman Canyon and the Indian Creek area project, balancing trail development with habitat conservation. O285 also shared insights on Outdoor Equity initiatives and results from a recent recreational user survey. Wild Connections values these meetings for face-to-face engagement and strengthening collaborative efforts.



*WC's India West with John Nishimoto (left) and Conservation Colorado's Brien Webster (right). Photo Conservation Colorado.*

### **June 13: Celebrating Environmental Achievements at "Rebel with a Cause" Gala**

India attended Conservation Colorado's "Rebel with a Cause" gala at the Botanical Gardens in Denver, CO. COCO, a long-time partner of ours, gathered members, activists, donors, elected leaders, and allies to celebrate environmental achievements and honor key contributors. CEO Kelly Nordini highlighted the successful legislative session advancing climate and conservation efforts, addressed ongoing challenges, and reaffirmed the organization's commitment to environmental leadership. The evening featured networking, a formal program, and a discussion on Colorado's 2024 environmental priorities. Attendees were recognized for their dedication to Colorado's environmental future and their efforts to nurture the "rebel" spirit driving positive change.



*WC June 15 Outing to the Kenosha Creek Beaver Dam Analogs and Ponds. Photo India West.*

### **June 15: Exploring Kenosha Pass: Signs of Ecological Revival**

Board treasurer Claude Neuman led several current and new Wild Connection members on a trek through the Kenosha Pass area. The purpose of the outing was to observe the human-constructed dams designed to mimic natural beaver dams. These structures aim to restore wetlands and entice beavers to return. During our visit, we saw early signs of success, such as pooling water and vegetation growth, sparking hope for an ecological revival as nature's architects potentially return. The group also observed two moose enjoying an afternoon snack in the shade of the forest.



*BLM RM RAC June 21 Field Tour to BLM's Penitente Canyon. Photo John Sztukowski.*

### **June 20-21: BLM Rocky Mountain RAC Meeting/Tour**

Wild Connections' John Sztukowski serves on BLM's Rocky Mountain Resource Advisory Council, who just had their annual meeting and field tour in the San Luis Valley.

A lot of exciting things are happening in BLM's San Luis Valley Field Office, including the large acreage La Jara acquisition with the FS, the Middle Creek acquisition near Saquache, the Lobatos Bridge Project, a proposed Rio Grande National Conservation Area and the Zapata Falls campground expansion.



### **Listening Sessions: Engaging with Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative**

Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative (OPPI), a subsidiary of Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, held several listening sessions in June about its upcoming initiatives regarding the use of public lands in the Pikes Peak region. Wild Connection's co-ED/fundraising, India West, and board president Jim Lockhart each attended one of these listening sessions. You can read more about [OPPI's plans here](#).

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## **Money Doesn't Grow on Trees...**



*Colorado's alleged largest Douglas Fir - 22 ft in circumference - located contiguous to the Chipeta Roadless Area. Photo John Sztukowski.*

But trees can thrive where Wild Connections invests time and resources! As leaders in the conservation community, we forge coalitions to promote wildlands and wildlife across Colorado. Our dedicated staff is committed to maintaining the organization's financial strength, allowing Wild Connections to advance our vision of a connected network of wildlands.

Donors like you are the bedrock of financial support for Wild Connections. Your donation ensures Colorado's wild areas remain intact and untrammled.

[Consider donating today](#) to help those trees grow wild and tall. Thank you!

Donate Here

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From all of us,  
*John, India, Jim, Alison, Claude and Kristin*  
Wild Connections Leadership Team

**Our Contact Information**  
\*{{Organization Name}}\*  
\*{{Organization Address}}\*  
\*{{Organization Phone}}\*  
\*{{Organization Website}}\*



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***We recognize our area as the ancestral lands of the Ute, Cheyenne, Jicarilla Apache, Arapaho and other indigenous peoples.***