

JUNE 2024

*View of Greenhorn Mountain from the prairie land to the east.
Photo: Vickie Smith*

Balancing Conservation and Recreation Region by Region

by Alison Gallensky

I have many wonderful memories from exploring the Wild Connections region in Central Colorado. Summiting Mount Bierstadt soon after I arrived in Colorado many years ago was my first 14er. Floating down the Arkansas river with a group of women was a great way to celebrate completing a multi-year course of study. And seeing the intense brightness of the full moon rising over Bassam Park near Browns Canyon was one highlight of volunteering with Wild Connections to map roadless areas.

Wildlife encounters were also exciting parts of my time spent outdoors, whether it was seeing wild turkeys in Mueller State Park, flushing deer in a drainage when mapping roadless areas near Browns Canyon, or counting many different species of ducks at Sands Lake State Wildlife Area near Salida.

However, recreation and wildlife do not always coexist peacefully. A key part of Wild Connections' vision for our region is to protect a connected network of large unfragmented natural areas that scientists say is critical to preserve biodiversity. Roads and trails used for recreation can fragment these natural areas and introduce invasive species that displace native ones. Numerous studies have shown that the presence of people recreating has a negative impact on elk and other wildlife, including decreasing the survival of calves. The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership recently determined that 40% of Colorado's most important elk habitat is affected by recreational trail use.

Fortunately the state of Colorado has prioritized "balancing the conservation of our wildlife and habitat with the recreational needs of our state." This is part of the charge of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), the state agency most focused on conserving and managing natural resources. CPW and the state recognize that no single agency or organization has the expertise and capacity to reach this complex goal by itself. Instead, over the last eight years (see timeline below), CPW has joined with other agencies to form the **Colorado Regional Partnership Initiative**. This initiative funds and supports regional groups that bring "together broad interests to advance conservation and outdoor recreation priorities for their area...[to] learn from and elevate community-level perspectives, values, and priorities to inform planning and projects across the state."

Continued on page 3



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Mission: Wild Connections, a science-based conservation organization, works to identify, protect and restore lands of the Upper Arkansas and South Platte watersheds to ensure the survival of native species and ecological richness.

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 Conservation Director

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Welcome the New Leadership
President's Message

by Jim Lockhart

This issue of Landscapes highlights Transitions, and as it notes, the year 2024 is already bringing major changes to Colorado wildlands. As an organization, Wild Connections is also beginning a major transition to a shared leadership team which will help us meet the new opportunities which these changes will present.

We welcome India West as our Co-Executive Director in charge of Fundraising. India comes to us from her role as Program Coordinator for Alumni and Constituent Relations for the University of Texas at Austin. She is an avid hiker and a long-time resident of the Pikes Peak region, familiar with our area and its environmental issues. She will work together with our long-time conservation director John Sztukowski, who has spent more than a decade leading our various environmental activities, including the public lands initiatives described in this newsletter, and who now takes on the role of our Co-Executive Director in charge of Conservation. This doubling of our paid staff will bring Wild Connections to a new level of effectiveness and will better enable us to continue to protect our wildlands.

Wild Connections has been, and will continue to be, a volunteer-driven organization. We rely on you and other readers of this newsletter to support us: by participating in our events, including our restoration projects; by commenting on agency decisions and coming to public meetings to support protection of the environment; and by supporting Wild Connections financially. We particularly want to thank the many donors to our Keep It Wild Fund, whose generous contributions have made this staff increase and the growth of our organization possible. These contributions of time, money, and effort make it possible for us to continue as an effective organization. ☺



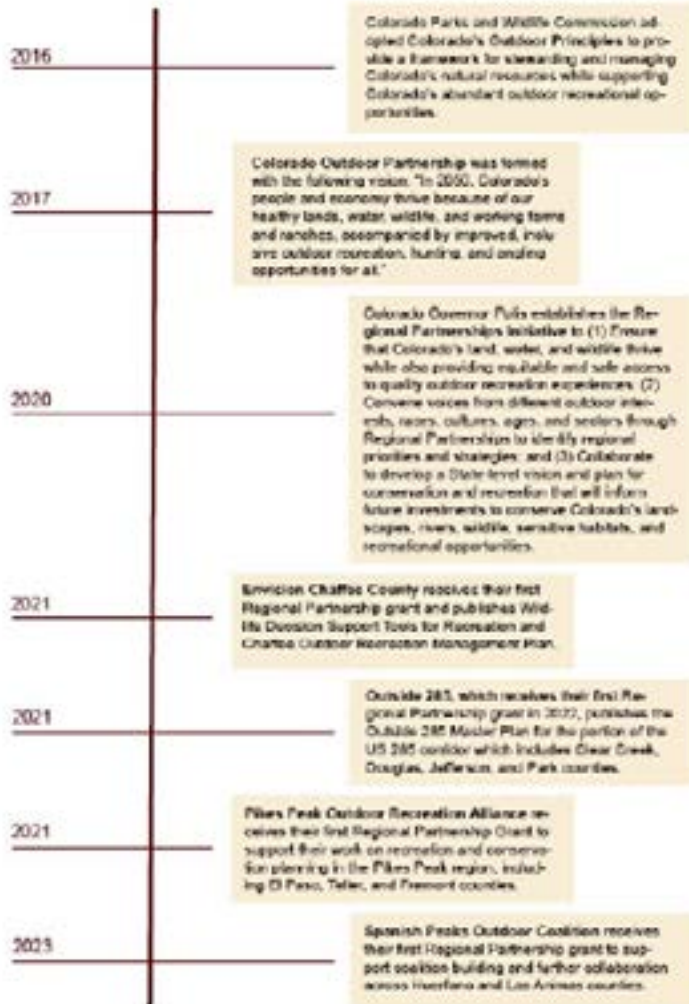
*The Co-Executive Directors: John Sztukowski took India West into Badger Creek roadless area as part of India's orientation.
 Photo: Jim Lockhart*

Balancing Conservation and Recreation Region by Region

Continued from page 1

Wild Connections has been an active participant in the **Outside 285** organization which was formed to improve recreational opportunities along the US 285 corridor in Clear Creek, Douglas, Jefferson, and Park counties. Outside 285 brings together state and federal agencies, organizations focused on recreation, conservation organizations, and other community groups. This collaboration has very successfully balanced the desire to improve the trail network in the region with the needs of wildlife. Outside 285 is now a Regional Partnership Organization and its work has inspired other organizations within the partnership.

Timeline of the Colorado Regional Partnership Initiative



Other Regional Partnership Organizations that work primarily in Wild Connections' region include **Envision Chaffee County**, not surprisingly working in Chaffee County, **Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance**, working in the Pikes Peak region, including El Paso, Teller, and Fremont counties, and the newly formed **Spanish Peaks Outdoor Coalition** working in Huerfano and Las Animas counties. Wild Connections is in touch with all of these organizations to ensure our conservation perspective is heard.

My volunteer work with Wild Connections led me to learn Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and inspired by current career using GIS to help meet conservation goals. One aspect of the Regional Partnership Initiative is that many of the organizations, including Outside 285 and Envision Chaffee County, are using GIS analysis to help balance recreation and conservation goals. I am pleased that my experience using GIS analysis to help Wild Connections has set me up for me to successfully support the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors Regional Partnership organization do similar work just south of the Wild Connections region.

The Regional Partnership Initiative is working to "to develop a State-level vision and plan for conservation and recreation that will inform future investments to conserve Colorado's landscapes, rivers, wildlife, sensitive habitats, and recreational opportunities." Wild Connections and the Regional Partner Organizations can use your help to ensure this vision reflects the passion for conservation shared by people in all regions of Colorado. See the links below to learn more about this Initiative and check out the Partner Organizations working in the landscapes you cherish. ☺

Continued on page 5

*This lake in Chaffee County is part of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, a landmark cooperative effort between CPW, the US Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service.
Photo: Dustin Doskocil/
Colorado Parks and Wildlife*



A Huge Win for Arkansas Canyonlands

The Final Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan

By John Sztukowski



BLM's Bear Mountain LWC.

After nearly a decade of community input and scientific analysis, the Bureau of Land Management approved the final plan for the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan earlier this year. This plan, managed by BLM's Royal Gorge Field Office, oversees 658,200 acres of public lands in central Colorado, mostly along the Arkansas River between Salida and Cañon City.

Wild Connections and our partners have been working on this planning effort since 2013, with the official plan kicking off in 2015. Along with local community leaders, hunters and anglers and other conservationists, we were really excited to see that the plan significantly increased protections in this planning area from about 79,000 acres to 300,000 acres. In addition, five Wilderness Study Areas in this

region, totaling 68,300 acres, moved forward in this plan without further analysis.

Most of the plan's conservation gains were primarily in the forms of Lands with Wilderness Characteristics (114,700 acres), Backcountry Conservation Areas (87,400 acres) and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (101,400 acres). LWCs and BCAs are new designations and management tools added to the region, while regional ACECs increased over 22,000 acres in total.

This plan also strengthened recreation management using two management prescriptions: Special and Extensive Recreation Management Areas. The final plan has 10 areas totaling 71,400 acres, including the 34,100 acre Gold Belt SRMA, which has 22,000 acres to be managed as the Red Canyon Primitive Recreation Management Zone, which will prioritize conservation management.

Wild Connections is particularly proud of the additional LWC areas added in this plan. Management to protect LWCs is the strongest conservation measure that BLM offers at the local level. Added In 2015, BLM only found about 77,000 acres in this region that qualified as LWC; however, after Wild Connections submitted and presented our LWC findings, based on our 2013-2015 field inventories and reports, BLM increased their LWC inventory to nearly 195,000 acres early in the ECRMP revision process.

While 114,700 acres of the 195,000 acres that BLM identified as LWC will be managed as such in the final plan, an additional 65,500 acres will have conservation management in some combination of the other aforementioned conservation designations. Some areas like Eightmile Mountain in the Arkansas River corridor and Cooper Mountain in the Gold Belt region have split management between LWC and BCA.

Additionally, this plan found that 60 BLM river miles, from five river/stream segments, were suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, consisting of four segments of the Arkansas River, as well as Eightmile Creek along Phantom Canyon in the Gold Belt region northeast of Cañon City.

While the BLM land and river conservation gains were impressive in this final plan, the BLM did miss the mark on reducing climate emissions on these public lands. It leaves the vast majority of BLM public lands open to future oil and gas leasing, and does not sufficiently improve air quality for the communities that are and will be affected oil and gas development.

In sum, this plan was a long time in the making, and we were excited and relieved to see a lot of the conservation and wildlife protections in the plan. More could have been done on climate impacts; however, the BLM declared that their hands were tied to get this planning effort completed so they could move forward with other plans. These BLM managed public lands will be affected by BLM Colorado's ongoing Big Game Management Plan and BLM's recently finalized Public Lands Rule, as well as the new federal mitigations required for the oil and gas industry announced in early May. ☺

Equal Footing for Conservation

BLM Public Lands Rule Benefits Protection and Recreation

By John Sztukowski

On April 24, BLM released their highly anticipated Public Lands Rule, which puts conservation and recreation on equal footing with extractive industries across all BLM lands in the United States!

This rule has been in the making for the past couple of years, however it has been needed and advocated for since the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act of 1976, which did not have the necessary regulatory framework built out for conservation. This Public Lands Rule builds that framework.

It gives control to local BLM managers to prioritize ecosystem resilience, regularly inventory intact lands, and manage for land health standards. The rule also offers up tools and recommendations for management, like Areas of Critical Environmental Concern designation and restoration and mitigation leases.

The BLM provided multiple public input opportunities last year for this planning effort, including six public meetings and a 90-day public comment period. Of more than 150,000 public comments submitted, the Center for Western Priorities found that 92% supported the Public Lands Rule.

Last year, Wild Connections did a lot of outreach around this rule: we cohosted a virtual event, interviewed for and provided info to the media, did outreach to our members and the public, and participated in virtual fly-ins with Colorado elected Senators and Representatives staff to educate them on the rule and ask for their support.

“BLM’s new Public Lands Rule is a commonsense and needed update that will greatly benefit area wildlife and their habitat connectivity in Wild Connections region, particularly in a changing climate,” said John Sztukowski, Conservation Director for Wild Connections. “This Rule will not only identify Bureau of Land Management lands that need restoration to improve degraded ecosystems and habitat, but through public processes, it will also help identify intact and climate resilient landscapes to connect and conserve wildlife habitat and migration corridors. We look forward to seeing the new rule in action.”

This is from our Colorado group press release, “Coloradans Applaud ‘Public Lands Rule’ Emphasizing Conservation and Recreation: State leaders urge swift action to conserve public lands, preserve resources, and protect wildlife habitat.” See it in full at wildconnections.org.

Balancing Conservation and Recreation Region by Region

Continued from page 3

Links

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife: <https://cpw.state.co.us/>
- Colorado Outdoor Principles: https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/COOutdoorPrinciples/CPW-Colorado-Outdoor_Principles.pdf
- The Colorado Outdoor Partnership: <https://copartnership.org/>
- Map of Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships funding recipients: https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/PartnersInTheOutdoors/ColoradoOutdoorRegionalPartnerships_MAP.pdf
- Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnership Initiative Story Map: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/393237b131b2455e9ff2fc3692c4226f>
- Colorado Outdoor Regional Partnerships Funding Program: <https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Regional-Partnerships-Initiative.aspx>
- Outdoor Recreation and Elk: A Colorado Case Study Story Map (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership): <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a0a8b0e3d65d4156886cd7e0cc5cee7f>
- Colorado Regional Partnership Organizations working primarily in Wild Connections’ region:
 - o Outside 285 (includes portions of Douglas, Clear Creek, and Jefferson Counties and all of Park County): <https://outside285.com/>
 - o Envision Chaffee County (part of the Central Colorado Recreation Partnership): <https://envisionchaffeecounty.org/>
 - o Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance (El Paso, Teller and Fremont Counties): <https://ppora.org/>
 - o Spanish Peaks Outdoor Coalition (Huerfano and Las Animas Counties): Website TBD



*Wildlife habitat will be better protected.
Photo: John Sztukowski*



Wolves are Back in Colorado

by Delia G. Malone, Chair of the Wildlife Committee of the Sierra Club Rocky Mountain Chapter



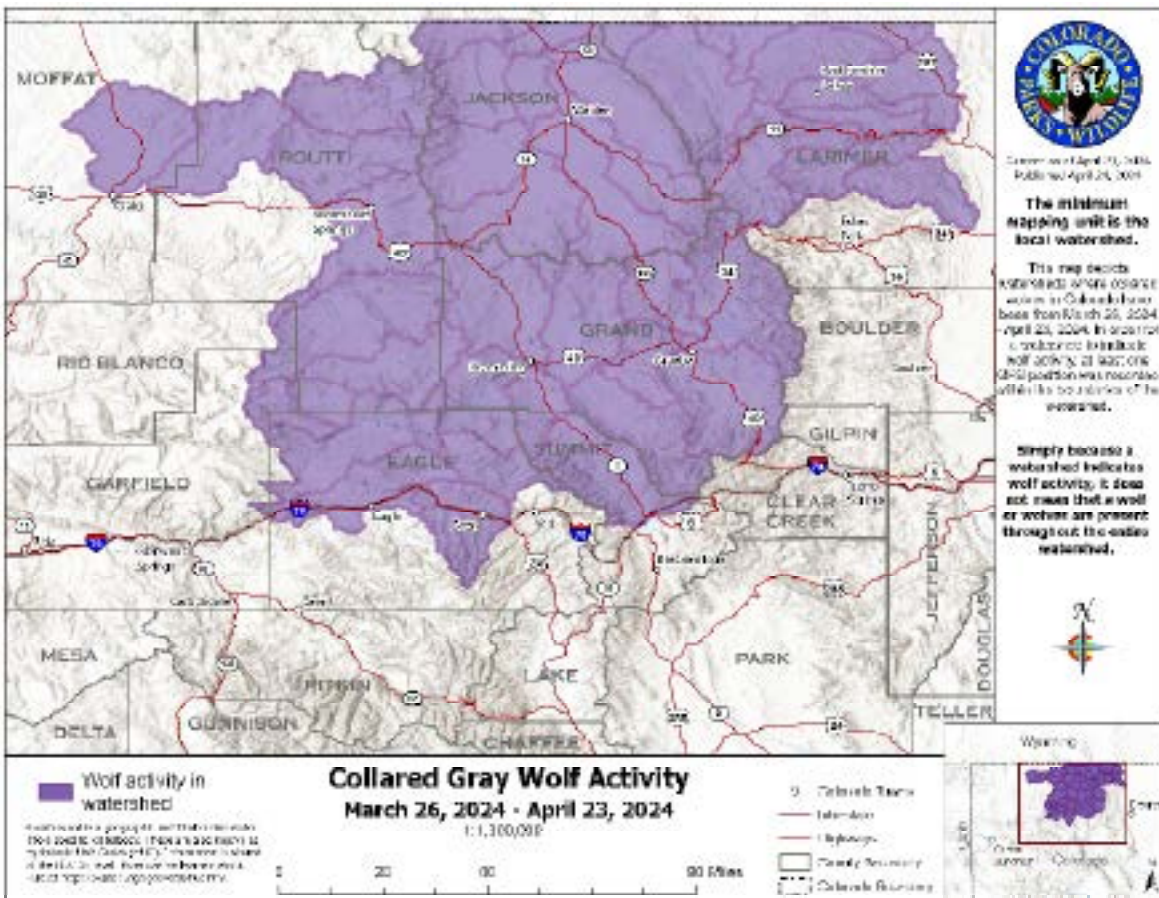
Gray Wolf.
Photo: US Fish & Wildlife Service

After an absence of 79 years gray wolves once again are gracing Colorado's wildlands with their song. Ten wolves from Oregon were reintroduced to Colorado in December of 2023 and two remain from a pack that had made it through Wyoming's gauntlet of guns to Colorado.

Now there are eleven. One of the Oregon wolves has died from apparently natural causes in Larimer County. There has been some conflict between the Oregon wolves and livestock. Since the reintroduction of this keystone species, seven cattle have been harvested by wolves. Owners of those livestock are eligible for "100 percent fair market value compensation" according to the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan. Yet, those livestock producers are asking CPW to lethally remove the wolves that may be responsible for the cattle loss.

Conflict between native carnivores and livestock is not inevitable. We know from twenty-five years of experience in the Northern Rockies that effective coexistence tools and methods allow both native carnivores and livestock to thrive on our public lands. Colorado Parks and Wildlife is providing significant resources and funding for Coloradans to coexist with wolves. We don't know however if those ranchers that lost cattle were using appropriate or sufficient coexistence methods to prevent conflict with the wolves – one of the most effective, long-term strategies is human presence in the form of range riders and herders.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Director, Jeff Davis, has rejected the ranchers' call for killing the wolves noting that "it is premature to kill one of the state's only eleven remaining wolves when the population is far below self-sustaining numbers," and that "the wolf that could be implicated in these depredations is the male of a pair that we believe to be denning. Removing the male breeder at this point would be irresponsible management and potentially cause the den to fail, possibly resulting in the death of the presumed pups. This is not a desirable result and I am therefore not going to take action at this time to lethally remove this animal."



Current as of April 23, 2024. Public as of April 24, 2024.

The watershed mapping unit is the local watershed.

This map depicts wolf activity in the watershed from March 26, 2024 - April 23, 2024. In order to be included in this map, wolf activity must be reported to CPW. Wolf activity was reported within the watershed.

Simply because a watershed indicates wolf activity, it does not mean that a wolf or wolves are present throughout the entire watershed.

Meanwhile, Colorado's wolves are just doing what wolves do, building their families and trying to survive, and in so doing, helping rewild Colorado's vast public lands.

☺

The CPW map makes it appear that wolves have ranged far and wide. However, simply because a watershed indicates wolf activity, it does not mean that a wolf or wolves are present throughout the entire watershed.

Once Gone, Coming Back: Wolverines

by Megan Mueller

After more than a 100-year absence, wolverines are poised to return to Colorado. Colorado lawmakers passed bipartisan legislation (Senate Bill 24-171) on May 3rd that would pave the way to restore the North American wolverine to Colorado.

“This is a huge win for wolverines and for Colorado’s wildlife,” said Megan Mueller, Conservation Biologist with Rocky Mountain Wild. “It’s amazing to see such broad, bipartisan support and recognition of the importance of bringing wolverines back to Colorado.”

Wolverines are a member of the weasel family, related to river otters and pine martens. Wolverines’ ruggedness is legendary. They are superbly adapted to live in high elevation (or high latitude) areas that are cold and snowy, where they roam vast territories in search of food. They eat mostly carcasses and small mammals. Females raise their young in deep snow dens, and males have been observed dropping off gifts of food at the dens of their mates.

Historically, wolverines ranged south from Canada and Alaska, through the mountainous regions of the west, to California, Utah, and Colorado. Wolverines roamed Colorado’s mountains for centuries, but were wiped out by trapping and poisoning in the early 1900’s. They disappeared from California and Utah during the same time period. There are fewer than 400 wolverines remaining in the contiguous US.

The last wolverine confirmed in Colorado was a lone male who wandered 500 miles from the Teton range in Wyoming to Colorado in 2009, and then to North Dakota where he was shot. While young male wolverines often travel long distances in search of territories and mates, female wolverines tend to stay closer to where they were born and are unlikely to make the difficult journey to Colorado.

Colorado has the largest unoccupied block of wolverine habitat in the contiguous US. As the climate changes, Colorado’s wolverine habitat is projected to stay snowier and colder than wolverine habitat in other parts of the western US. Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) estimates that Colorado can support roughly 140-180 wolverines. Reintroducing wolverines to Colorado can significantly increase wolverine population capacity in the Western US and help wolverines cope with climate change.

With the leadership of State Senator Perry Will (R), Senator Dylan Roberts (D), Representative McLachlan (D) and Representative Mauro (D), this bipartisan legislation will restore the wolverine to Colorado and CPW will begin a multi-year reintroduction process that would include updating CPW’s existing reintroduction plan and addressing stakeholder concerns. ☺



Senator Perry Will (R) and Senator Dylan Roberts (D) introduce the Wolverine bill to the Colorado Senate.

Photo: Becky Long



Male wolverine traveled to Rocky Mountain National Park in 2009.
Photo: Ray Rafiti, courtesy of Rocky Mountain Wild

From Isolated Parcels to Protected Wild Lands

By John Sztukowski

Wild Connections' mission focuses around protecting and restoring wild lands and waters in this region, with an emphasis on public areas. Some of our wildest places have fortunately been permanently protected through Wilderness designation, or have strong local designations like BLM Wilderness Study Areas. However, not all of the most deserving places are protected, and with continual development and other resource demands, we have seen special areas shrink over time. Thankfully this is not always the case. Land and resource use, and land ownership, can go both ways. Every once in a while we get a breath of fresh air such as additions to public lands areas and reclaiming former mining or logging areas. We want to share with you these three conservation wins that have already taken place this year in the form of new Colorado public lands areas protected via private property acquisitions.

No more private property atop the Blanca Peak Roadless Area

In January of this year, The Wilderness Land Trust acquired 45 acres over six parcels on the slopes of Blanca Peak above Lilly Lake and the headwaters of the Huerfano River. These former mining claims were transferred to the US Forest Service, managed by the San Carlos Ranger District, removing the last private property parcels from Blanca Peak.

Wild Connections coordinated with The Wilderness Land Trust last summer on these parcels and their locations. They are all very close to the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness (designated in 1993) and are located within the Colorado Roadless Areas *Sangre de Cristo: Blanca Peak to Slide Mountain*, which were identified in Wild Connections Conservation Plan (2006). Our WCCP helped inform the Forest Service about Roadless Areas like these that deserved inclusion and were added to the Colorado Roadless Rule (2012) for our region.

When the Forest Service's Pike-San Isabel Resource Management Plan is revised, currently (and optimistically) estimated to begin in 2028, these roadless areas, including these recent additions, will be determined for their management as Forest Service Recommended Wilderness. Given that they already have the classification as Colorado Roadless Areas, there is a good chance that they will become Recommended Wilderness. Roadless Areas like this, already adjacent to the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness, ideally will be added to the existing Wilderness (with a capital W!) one day.

WLT has more info at <https://wildernesslandtrust.org/last-threat-of-development-removed-from-the-sacred-blanca-peak/>

Continued on page 10



*This wetland is one of the habitat features in CPW's newly designed State Wildlife Area at Collard Ranch, Park County.
Photo: Christi Bode*

Restoration Works: A Tool for Public Lands Conservation

By Kristin Skoog

Wild Connections' mission is to create a system of connected wildlands where diverse native species can thrive. We use complementary tools to support that mission: conservation and restoration. This article focuses on restoration of public lands as applied in our region.

Introduction to Restoration

Ecological restoration repairs disturbed ecosystems through human intervention. *Restoration ecology* is the scientific study that results in restoration activity. *Conservation biology* is a field of science used to address the loss of biodiversity. Restoration efforts are often focused on reestablishing ecosystems with high potential for biodiversity. Goals of restoration often include supporting native plant life. However, animal reintroduction, a common technique of conservation biology, is also essentially a form of restoration. Note: The reintroduction of wolverines and wolves in Colorado is also described in this issue of *Landscapes*.

Motivations and Goals for Restoration

Healthy ecosystems provide aesthetic and recreational benefits for many people. Our Earth is undergoing a massive global extinction event, where many inherently valuable species are being lost forever. To promote biodiversity, restoration is being used to combat the loss of our biological resources and ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are processes provided by nature that support human life. Examples of ecosystem services include renewal of soil fertility, water filtration and catchment, plus animal species' processes such as pollination. A primary goal for restoration is to increase the populations of species native to the area. Goals may also include allowing the effects of disturbances such as flooding, landslides, wind, and wildfire to run their natural courses.

The Process of Restoration

When Wild Connections is planning a restoration project on public lands, there are many steps in the process. Potential restoration sites are assessed for environmental, physical, and historical attributes. Boundaries are designed to limit human access and disturbances, such as mining, grazing, logging, and vehicular traffic. Plans are made for the removal of trash, destruction of fire rings, and preparing compacted soil for planting. Biologists define what native vegetation can be restored by transplanting or seeding. Once the initial restoration work is completed, the area will be monitored to determine the success of the project and whether more action is needed. Game cameras can be used to gauge whether wildlife has returned.

Restoration is Localized

Many restoration projects are initiated locally or regionally and implemented by community volunteers. Wild Connections continues to work for restoration of Wildcat Canyon on the South Platte River, a rare ribbon of green where plants and wildlife escaped the devastating Hayman Fire. Illegal motorized traffic is eroding the hillsides and polluting the river. The Wildcat Canyon restoration project will eventually close those illegal routes, stabilize the eroded area, and allow wildlife to benefit from decreased noise and human disturbance. Wild Connections is also working on the North Farnum roadless area near the Tarryall Reservoir to limit disturbance in an important migration corridor between the Lost Creek Wilderness and South Park.

Restoration is Uncertain and Contentious

Restoration of natural ecosystems is inherently uncertain because it is difficult if not impossible to replace artificially an ecosystem that developed naturally over eons. New plants may fail to thrive or animals may not return. It can be difficult to determine how long the restored site must be monitored before the restoration can be considered successful.

Restoration projects can also be contentious, because they can limit access to protected areas and natural resources. One contentious issue is the process called mitigation, in which destruction of some populations or habitats allows recovery of desirable populations. Mitigation is being used at

Continued on page 10



Mitigation at Rock Creek in South Park will exterminate non-native brook trout to allow reintroduction of native Greenback Cutthroat Trout. Brook trout fans may not agree with this process.

Photo: Claude Neumann

From Isolated Parcels to Protected Lands

Continued from page 8

10 acres of acquired property added to the Holy Cross Wilderness

The Wilderness Land Trust was at it again in April! In 2022 they acquired 10.2 acres, known as the Northern Lode inholding, on a very steep slope below the 13,000-foot Homestake Peak in the Holy Cross Wilderness. The Trust recently was able to transfer this property to the US Forest Service, managed by the Leadville Ranger District. And in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, since this entire acquisition was located within an existing Wilderness, the Holy Cross Wilderness, it was automatically designated as Wilderness and is precluded from development. This parcel, historically used for mining and mineral exploration, will now be consolidated forever into the Holy Cross Wilderness. It was the second to last private inholding on the Pike-San Isabel side of the Holy Cross Wilderness.

Learn more in the Forest Service's 4/9 News Release: fs.usda.gov/detail/psicc/news-events/?cid=FSEPRD1171512

New 1,860-acre CPW state wildlife area added in Park County

In March, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Governor Polis announced the newest Colorado State Wildlife Area (SWA) at Collard Ranch in South Park. The ranch was purchased by the Western Rivers Conservancy and sold to CPW, using funds generated through sales of the Colorado Habitat Stamp, which is required as part of purchasing a Colorado fishing or hunting license.

The new State Wildlife Area is 1,860 acres and is prized for the pristine Tarryall Creek flowing through it. CPW noted an important elk migration corridor through the property, part of a primary route for thousands of Rocky Mountain elk's annual migration from the mountains to the lower-elevation grasslands. CPW said that the area is often frequented by mule deer and pronghorn as well. The SWA also provides five miles of excellent fishing habitat along Tarryall Creek, improved by several beaver residents with their dams and ponds. The property also provides iconic views of Kenosha Pass and area mountains.

This new SWA, like other Colorado SWAs, will be accessible to the public who have a valid Colorado hunting or fishing license or State Wildlife Area pass. Note that the SWA at Collard Ranch is not open to the public yet, as CPW needs to complete some accessibility enhancements and infrastructure needs. This new SWA will be added to the over 350 SWAs that CPW manages statewide.

Learn more in CPW's 3/15 News Release: <https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/News-Release-Details.aspx?NewsID=4064>



Restoration Works: A Tool for Public Lands Conservation

Continued from page 9

Rock Creek in South Park, where Wild Connections is working with Colorado Trout Unlimited and the Forest Service to exterminate non-native brook trout to allow eventual re-introduction of the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout - Colorado's State Fish. Brook trout fans may not agree with this process. In addition, restoration projects prescribed by law can be unpopular with a variety of local interests, and challenges in court can delay implementation for many years.

There's hope: Conservation works

A recent study provided encouraging results that conservation really works. The study analyzed hundreds of different conservation interventions that occurred across the globe over the last century. The research showed that more large-scale habitat restoration would help to increase biodiversity.

"What we found was extremely encouraging: conservation efforts work, and they work pretty much everywhere. We found that conservation actions improved the state of biodiversity or slowed its decline in the majority of cases (66%) compared with no action. But more importantly, when conservation interventions work, we found that they are highly effective... The challenge now is to fund conservation on the scale needed to halt and reverse declines in biodiversity and give these proven methods the best chance of success."

Wild Connections looks forward to your support on our next restoration project. Together, we can make a difference!

References:

Nature conservation works, and we're getting better at it - new study

by Joseph William Bull & Jake E. Bicknell, *The Conversation*



Money does not grow on trees...



Colorado's alleged largest Douglas Fir - 22 ft in circumference – located in the Chipeta roadless area.

Photo: Wild Connections

... but trees can thrive where Wild Connections spends time and money! As you have read in this issue, Wild Connections has been very effective at promoting new protections for wilderness-quality areas in the Arkansas Canyonlands.

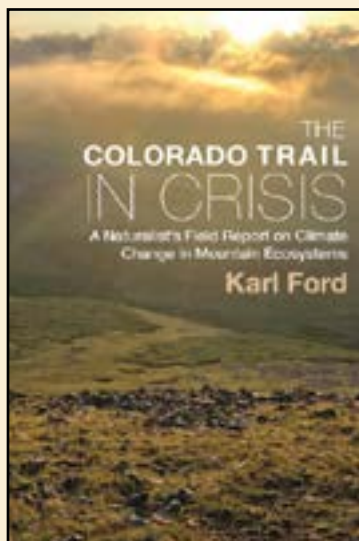
Your donation is crucial to keep Colorado's wild areas intact and untrammled, so that native plants and wildlife can thrive in protected areas.

New conservation rules at the BLM will allow expanded conservation programs that were not possible under prior regulations. We are leaders in the conservation community who can forge coalitions to promote wildlands and wildlife across Colorado. Our expanded staff is devoted to keeping the organization financially strong, which enables Wild Connections to take further action to fulfill the vision of a network of connected wildlands.

Donors like you are still the bedrock of financial support for Wild Connections. Your donation will keep Colorado's wild areas intact and untrammled. Money does not grow on trees - you work hard to earn it, and rest assured that Wild Connections carefully considers how to use every dollar. **Please consider donating today to help those trees grow wild and tall.** We deeply appreciate every donor and volunteer, and we love to hug those trees. Thank you! ☺

Buy *The Colorado Trail in Crisis* and Support Wild Connections' Climate Work

Dr. Karl Ford relates his adventures on the Colorado Trail and discusses research done in Colorado on climate change and its effects on our forests, wildlife, and watersheds. Buy direct from him and Karl will make a donation to Wild Connections. Send a check to Karl Ford (\$15 paperback, \$46 hardback) to P.O.Box 6324, Longmont CO 80501. ☺



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on WC's page at Colorado Gives Day 365



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