



August 29, 2024

Dear Colleague,

As we enjoy these last weeks of summer, we reflect on the significant achievements and shared experiences of the past months, marked by community events, educational hikes and connecting with our partners. We thank all our members for their support and engagement.

Join us as we review this summer's highlights in our Director's Log. We look forward to an exciting fall, filled with more opportunities to further our mission to protect Colorado's wildlands and wildlife.

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## **DIRECTORS LOG**

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*BLM CO State Director, Doug Vilsack (right) welcomes new BLM RGFO Field Manager, Doug Mayes (left). Photo BLM*

### **BLM Royal Gorge Manager Swear-In Ceremony** ***Tuesday, July 9***

Wild Connections' John Sztukowski was one of the few members of the public to go to the oath-of-office ceremony for [new BLM Royal Gorge Field Office Field Manager, Doug Mayes](#), gaining an invite as a member of BLM's Rocky Mountain Resource Advisory Council.

John had a chance to meet and welcome Doug to the region, as well as catch up with other BLM Royal Gorge staff and BLM Colorado State Director, Doug Vilsack.



*Scouting a potential restoration project with the USFS at the Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area.*

### **2025 Restoration Project Scouting with FS** ***Monday, July 15***

We got out with the Forest Service South Park Ranger District to scout a restoration project at their Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area, just south of Elevenmile Canyon Reservoir in southern South Park.

Next year, we plan to partner with the Forest Service SPRD to close a decommissioned road and illegal route at the southeastern portion of ThirtyNine Mile Mountain, which will expand the Roadless Area by an additional 1,300 acres!

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*Looking down revegetating route from Wild Connections 2023 North Farnum Roadless Area Restoration Project.*

## **Farnum Roadless Area Project Monitoring** ***Monday, July 15***

The work from our 2022-23 partner project with the Forest Service South Park Ranger District is looking like a resounding success!

The decommissioned route that we raked and seeded last year at the northern portion of the Farnum Roadless Area is revegetating very nicely, and there are no signs of illegal motorized trespass here or at Packer Gulch where the former illegal routes had continued. Big thanks to Wild Connections' volunteers that contributed to this success!



*Our (four) closures along Packer Gulch bordering the west side of the Farnum Roadless Area, from our 2022-23 and 2017 restoration projects, are holding up well, with no signs of trespass, creating intact habitat and calving areas for resident wildlife, like this moose family (Mama just offscreen).*



*WC and RGPP tabling at Cañon City's 2024 Whitewater Festival.*

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

We had a great time tabling at the Royal Gorge Whitewater Festival at Cañon City's Centennial Park, and engaging with local residents on public lands issues and opportunities.

Big thanks to Royal Gorge Preservation Project's Paul Tanner, who tabled with us both days, educating the public on the Zephyr mining threats adjacent to Cañon City's Dawson Ranch neighborhood.

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

India West and Claude Neuman hosted Wild Connection's informational booth at the 75th annual Burro Days Celebration in Fairplay, Colorado. Held on the last weekend of July, this three-day event features the historic World Championship Pack Burro Race, which began in 1949 with 21 competitors. Today, the race attracts nearly 100 participants and their burros, who may choose between a 15-mile lower altitude course or a challenging 29+ mile ascent to



*One of the first teams crossing the finish line of the 15-mile race. Photo India West.*

Mosquito Pass, starting at 9,953 feet and climbing to 13,185 feet.

Wild Connections was proud to be represented alongside partner organizations such as the National Forest Service South Park Ranger District, Mountain Area Land Trust, and Mosquito Range Historical Initiative, among others, to promote the protection of Colorado's wildlands. We enjoyed many enriching conversations, reconnected with current members, and welcomed new members to our community. Thank you for your ongoing support of our mission; we are thrilled to have you with us!

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### **Pollinating Climate Action Festival** ***Sunday, August 4***



*India and Wild Connections volunteers tabling at the Aug 4 Pollinating Climate Action event in Manitou Springs. Photo Jim Lockhart*

Wild Connections partnered with 350 Colorado, Manitou Pollinators, the Manitou Farmer's Market, and other local organizations and businesses to host a community-focused event where attendees could learn about the connection between taking care of the environment through native plants, pollinators, garden health, and climate justice!

Wild Connections' India West and Jim Lockhart hosted a booth at the event and delivered a presentation on our Central Colorado Climate Corridors and Refugia Project. It was wonderful to connect with attendees and event partners, creating greater awareness and opening up the conversation about vital environmental and conservation issues in our region.

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### **Inventorying Routes for BLM's new 31 Mile Mountain/S South Park Travel Management Plan** ***Wednesday, August 7***



*Faint signs of a route across BLM's Cottonwood Creek Backcountry Conservation Area, looking up at FS Black Mountain.*

Wild Connections partnered with Quiet Use Coalition to inventory routes and submit public comments for the BLM's new Travel Management Plan for their Thirtyone Mile Mountain and southern South Park area.

This planning area includes four recently designated Backcountry Conservation Areas. We submitted detailed comments, including for routes in BCAs that BLM inventoried as open to the public that don't otherwise exist on the ground, are solely for grazing infrastructure, and routes that lead deep into Forest Service that are not designated there.

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## **La Salle Project Monitoring** ***Saturday, August 10***



*Revegetation on closed routes at La Salle restoration project sites, benefiting Colorado Birds of Special Concern and other area wildlife. Photos Jim Lockhart.*

We were also able to get back to our 2020 restoration project area at La Salle, in the Badger Flats area of South Park, where we partnered with the Forest Service to close illegal routes by installing 124 posts with cable in four different sections, followed up by a seeding day. The closed routes help protect Colorado Birds of Special Concern, including golden eagles, bald eagles and Peregrine falcons, which all take refuge in the area.

On this monitoring outing, we pleasantly saw no signs of motorized trespass at the project sites. The amount of revegetation varied, with much more success where we had the road ripped up for seeding.



**Wild Connections**  
FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PLAINS

**REWILDING COLORADO:  
A CONSERVATION DIALOGUE  
WITH  
DR. MARC BEKOFF AND  
FIRST GENTLEMAN MARLON REIS**

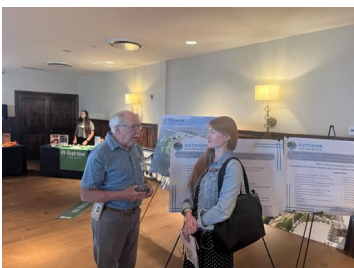
**VIRTUAL EVENT:  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14  
4:30PM - 5:30PM MDT  
REGISTER TO ATTEND TODAY!**

## **Rewilding Virtual Event with Dr. Marc Bekoff and First Gentleman Marlon Reis** ***Wednesday, August 14***

We were thrilled to host Dr. Marc Bekoff and First Gentleman Marlon Reis, alongside Wild Connections' Jim Lockhart and John Sztukowski, for a discussion on rewilding in Colorado and the ongoing efforts to restore and connect wildlife habitats.

View a recording of the webinar on [Wild Connections YouTube channel here](#).

## **PPORA State of the Outdoors** ***Tuesday, August 20***



Wild Connections' India and John attended the Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance State of the Outdoors event in Colorado Springs. Speakers included Luis Benitez, PPORA's Becky Leinweber and GOCO's Jackie Miller.

*India discussing the Outdoor Pikes Peak Initiative at the 2024 PPORA State of the Outdoors.*



### **Setting up data loggers at Beaver Creek** ***Friday, August 23***

After a couple successful climate educational hikes last year, we are planning for our first one of 2024 at BLM's Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area, located between Colorado Springs and Cañon City.

We ordered a few more Kestrel data loggers this summer and recently planted four to record temperature, humidity, and other data points in different sections of the WSA.

Be on the lookout for this upcoming outing, which will be announced soon!



### **North Catamount Creek Hike** ***Sunday, August 25***

We had a beautiful day for our most recent outing, to North Catamount Creek, on the northern flanks of of Pikes Peak.

This candidate Pikes Peak West Wilderness area has been affected by recent National Forest timber and Colorado Springs Utilities thinning projects.

*WC 2024 North Catamount  
Creek hike. Photo Jim Lockhart*

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And you can see everything that we have upcoming, including a Sep 3 Pint Night at Seven's Gate Tap Room in Colorado Springs, at [wildconnections.org/events](https://wildconnections.org/events).

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XOXO,  
*John and India*  
Wild Connections Co-Executive Directors

#### **Our Contact Information**

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Donate

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