LANDSCAPES
Wild Connections
FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE PRAIRIES
August 2025

Pronghorn standing strong.

Political Headwinds: Attacks on our Public Lands and Managing Agencies

by John Sztukowski

We are just a few months into the second Trump administration and the attacks on our public lands and public land managers have been vast and far-reaching, much more so than during the first Trump administration.

Like much of the destruction from this current administration, the attack on public lands has been deliberate, and uses a “flood the zone” approach to disorient and overwhelm any opposition. There have been several executive and secretarial orders that task the public lands agencies with prioritizing non-renewable energy extraction, large-scale logging, and other resource extraction. There are actions to dismantle both new and longstanding regulations and regulatory bodies, including the Endangered Species Act, the US Environmental Policy Agency, the BLM Public Lands Rule, and the Antiquities Act. The Antiquities Act is how most National Monuments get designated, including Browns Canyon and Florissant Fossil Beds in our region.

In this issue, Wild Connections focuses on current and historical threats to public lands. We describe how you can respond to help fend off ongoing attempts to undermine the processes and agencies that keep our public lands unspoiled and accessible to our citizens and wildlife.

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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.

Support our mission today! Scan the QR code below to make a donations

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Standing Strong Today to Protect Public Lands

President's Message

by Jim Lockhart

This issue of Landscapes has a double focus: to mark our 30th anniversary as an organization and to alert you to the enormous ongoing threats to wild areas in our part of Colorado – and what we, working together, can do to fight them.

The current administration has been in office just a few months; yet in that time we have seen an all-out effort to undo decades worth of efforts to preserve our wildlands. Executive orders and bills before Congress have sought to sell off public lands, to exploit public lands for short-term gain, to defund and reduce the staff of federal agencies that manage these areas, to nullify the environmental laws that protect them, and to cripple efforts to deal with the ongoing threat of climate change. Wild Connections is devoted to opposing these acts of environmental destruction and working with other environmental organizations to minimize their impact. In 2025 we will continue our restoration work. We will continue to educate the public on threats to our public lands and opportunities to defend them. We urge government agencies to develop plans and make management decisions that preserve our wild areas.

It would be easy to be altogether downbeat about the current situation. However, I think that it is also important that we mark Wild Connections' 30 years as an organization and recognize the tremendous achievements that our leaders, staff, volunteers – and you – have made possible. During that time, we have developed the Wild Connections Conservation Plan, worked to expand and protect roadless areas under the Colorado Roadless Rule, and spearheaded a group of conservation organizations working to identify and protect important wild areas under the BLM Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan. We have also participated in several Forest Service travel management plans. We helped to get Browns Canyon designated as a National Monument. We are presently working with Colorado's Regional Partnerships to plan for the future. We have developed and used climate modeling tools to identify the impacts of climate change on our wild areas. We have completed many restoration projects and led many hikes and field trips to wild areas.

My part in all of this has been a very enjoyable and rewarding experience. Yours can be also. We invite you to continue to support Wild Connections and to take part in our activities. We are indeed standing strong to protect public lands. We cannot do this without you.

President Jim Lockhart raking 39 Mile Mountain roadless area as part of the July 2025 restoration project.
Photo: Dillon Eldridge

The Largest Threat to our Public Lands is Selling Them Off

by John Sztukowski

The most egregious actions taken by this administration are the attempts to begin selling off our federal public lands. In May 2025, a US House reconciliation bill passed in committee that included selling over 500,000 acres of US public lands in Utah and Nevada. This bill failed the initial full House vote. Fortunately, the public lands sell-off amendment (the Amodei Amendment) was removed before the US House eventually passed their reconciliation bill.

The Amodei amendment has been the most real and prevalent threat to date that sells off or gives away our valuable and cherished federal public lands. The initial guise is to do so by asserting that the land will be used for affordable housing, which the amendment claimed regarding the land to be transferred in Utah and Nevada. However, the amendment not only had loopholes that did not adequately address the housing crisis, but it also overlooked the fact that there is already a method in local resource management processes to transfer land between federal and state jurisdictions. The primary consideration for this unprecedented sell-off of public lands was calculated to help offset the tax cuts in Trump's proposed Big Beautiful Bill.

Transferring public lands to the state is dangerous. At first glance, it may sound nice for states to gain ownership and manage federal public lands in their state, bringing management decisions closer to home. However, there are two main flaws with this argument.

The first flaw is that the states cannot afford to manage these vast swaths of public lands. States must balance their budgets every year, unlike the federal government. One average or bad fire season would cripple a state's budget, forcing them to sell public lands to balance an annual budget even if they don't want to.

Hikers crossing the creek at Warmer Gulch State Land Trust Area
Photo: India West

Secondly, and more nefariously flawed, states already have a history of selling off their public lands. Most western states were granted millions of acres of state land by the federal government upon gaining statehood. And while some states like Colorado lease their state lands for profit instead of selling them, other states are not so future-minded. For example, our neighbor to the west, Utah, was granted 7.5 million acres of state land in 1896. A report from The Wilderness Society shows that more than 54% (4.1 million acres) of that state land has been sold. Utah is now demanding that the 35 million acres of federal public land in the state be transferred to the state. It is hard to trust public land management that has a history of selling off the cherished lands that they should instead be stewarding.

It is a slippery slope to open public lands for sale. Once initiated, the precedent would set off sales of public lands and resources to the highest bidders, many in the form of international corporations focused on resource extraction. Those sales would eliminate access to public lands for everyday Americans and tourists, decimating local economies based on tourism and recreation.

While there was no public lands sell-off in the final version of the 2025 reconciliation bill, any sigh of relief will surely be drowned out by other outcries. I refer not only to the other attacks on our public lands and the wildlife that those lands support, but also to the groundwork that this administration is laying to sell off our public lands in the future.

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Standing Strong: Florissant Fossil Beds

by Jean Smith

Our public lands are under assault from the Administrative branch of our government! National Monuments, the US Forrest Service and Bureau of Land Management in our region are suffering from the unwarranted downsizing of staff and administrative directives that roll back established protections.

Each day I am outraged and then baffled: what can I do? Most of the antidotes require Congressional action or a decision by the Federal court system.

Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument-one example. The fossil beds at Florissant are some of the richest and most diverse fossil deposits in the world. The fossils include petrified redwood stumps and thousands of insects and plants dating back 34 million years.

Staff at the Fossil Beds were cut in the early days of 2025. The administration at the Monument has pulled staff from other duties to keep the Monument open seven days a week. I volunteered at the Fossil Beds for several years, and I know the valuable service that these people provided: patrolling for fossil poachers and wildfires, cleaning the restrooms, mentoring Junior Rangers, maintaining the trails, and monitoring beaver use in the wetlands. Who is doing those important tasks now?

This is not the first time this land has been threatened. In the early 1900s, the area was busy with potato farms, and tourist attractions were centered on the giant sequoia stumps. Then in 1969, real estate developers wanted to scrape off everything, including the fossils, to build rural homes. But in May, 1968 Estella Leopold and Beatrice Willard put together a group of "…the most prestigious scientists and civic leaders in the community…" named Defenders of Florissant.

More than 100 people gathered at Florissant Fossil Beds on March 1, 2025 to show their support for National Parks.

Wild Connections stands in solidarity with our Pike-San Isabel National Forest, Royal Gorge BLM and Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument staff. We're doing what we can, and we urge you to fight back!

Photo: Jim Lockhart

Wild turkeys at Florissant Fossil Beds
Photo: Jean Smith

The Defenders mounted a grassroots campaign to protect the fossils. These women, aided by astute lawyers, stood strong in the face of powerful political and economic interests. The backstory – perhaps apocryphal – is that they stood in front of the bulldozers in their high heels and pearls in case the last-ditch protection efforts failed. A series of Senate bills and Federal Court decisions provided high drama throughout the summer until August, when President Nixon signed the bill establishing the Monument.

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“Fix Our Forests” Act Would Destroy Forests Without Protecting Communities

By Rocky Smith, Independent Forest Management Analyst

Forests are extremely valuable for watersheds, wildlife, carbon storage, recreation, and so much more. The deceptively named “Fix Our Forests” Act, or FOFA, does nothing to conserve forests to retain these values. Instead, it would emphasize logging and manipulating forests at a scale we haven’t seen on public lands for many decades, if ever. The misguided bill was recently introduced by Colorado’s own Senator John Hickenlooper and other western Senators. The bill has already passed the House.

The Senate version of FOFA encourages the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, which manage most of the federal lands in the western U.S., to avoid careful examination of impacts from logging. Loggers could sidestep actions that reduce the resulting harms, even though those actions are required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Under FOFA, projects up to 10,000 acres - over 15 square miles - would be excluded from consideration of possible impacts. The effects to watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation, and scenery would be massive. What’s more, the public would have only one chance to provide input for logging projects and objections could only be raised in court.

If “Fix Our Forests” passes, land management agencies would no longer need to consult about their management plans with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Before FOFA, those reviews determined if new threatened or endangered species have been listed, and if critical habitat for those species has been designated. With FOFA, the consultation would be skipped, even if it would have determined that new information has surfaced concerning what actions are needed for an endangered species to recover to a stable population. This provision could lead to further harm to species already on the edge of continued existence.

The use of livestock grazing to reduce the risk of fire would also be encouraged. Grazing can be extremely harmful to fragile ecosystems, especially near streams and lakes, where animal waste can pollute important water resources. Livestock can also denude vegetation, leading to invasion by non-native species. One such species is cheatgrass, which burns easily and readily reestablishes itself after fires. Yet under FOFA, grazing could be used for “post-fire restoration and recovery,” in spite of adverse impacts.

Under recent direction from its Washington Office, the U.S. Forest Service would be encouraged to use methods of approving logging projects that basically allow loggers to select which trees they want to cut for sale to lumber mills. The largest trees, which are the ones most valuable for wildlife and storing carbon, would likely be taken. FOFA would even allow logging for the purpose of “retaining and expanding forest products infrastructure.” This means that logging is allowed with the sole goal of benefiting the logging industry by giving them logs from public lands at taxpayer expense.

In the bill, “high priority hazard trees” would be defined as those trees likely to fall, which could, of course, mean almost all trees in the forest. Areas up to 6,000 acres that contain such trees within 300 feet of Forest Service roads could be cut with no consideration of impacts. Similarly, trees that could fall within 150 feet of a powerline could be felled with no assessment of possible impacts.

Science, much of it researched by the Forest Service, clearly shows the best way to protect houses and other infrastructure from fire hazards: Remove flammable material from the structures and an area of no more than 100 feet surrounding those structures. Cutting our public forests will not protect our communities. We don’t need to degrade and destroy forests to save our homes and infrastructure from fire

Our forests need more protection from harmful activities, not less, in order to retain the great benefits that forests provide for humans and other species. If you care about protecting our public lands and communities, please contact Senators Hickenlooper and Bennet today and insist that “Fix Our Forests” not become law.

About the Author: *Rocky has been analyzing laws, regulations, policies, plans, and projects pertaining to national forests for 45 years. He provides expert advice to Wild Connections about potential legislative impacts to wildlands in our region.*

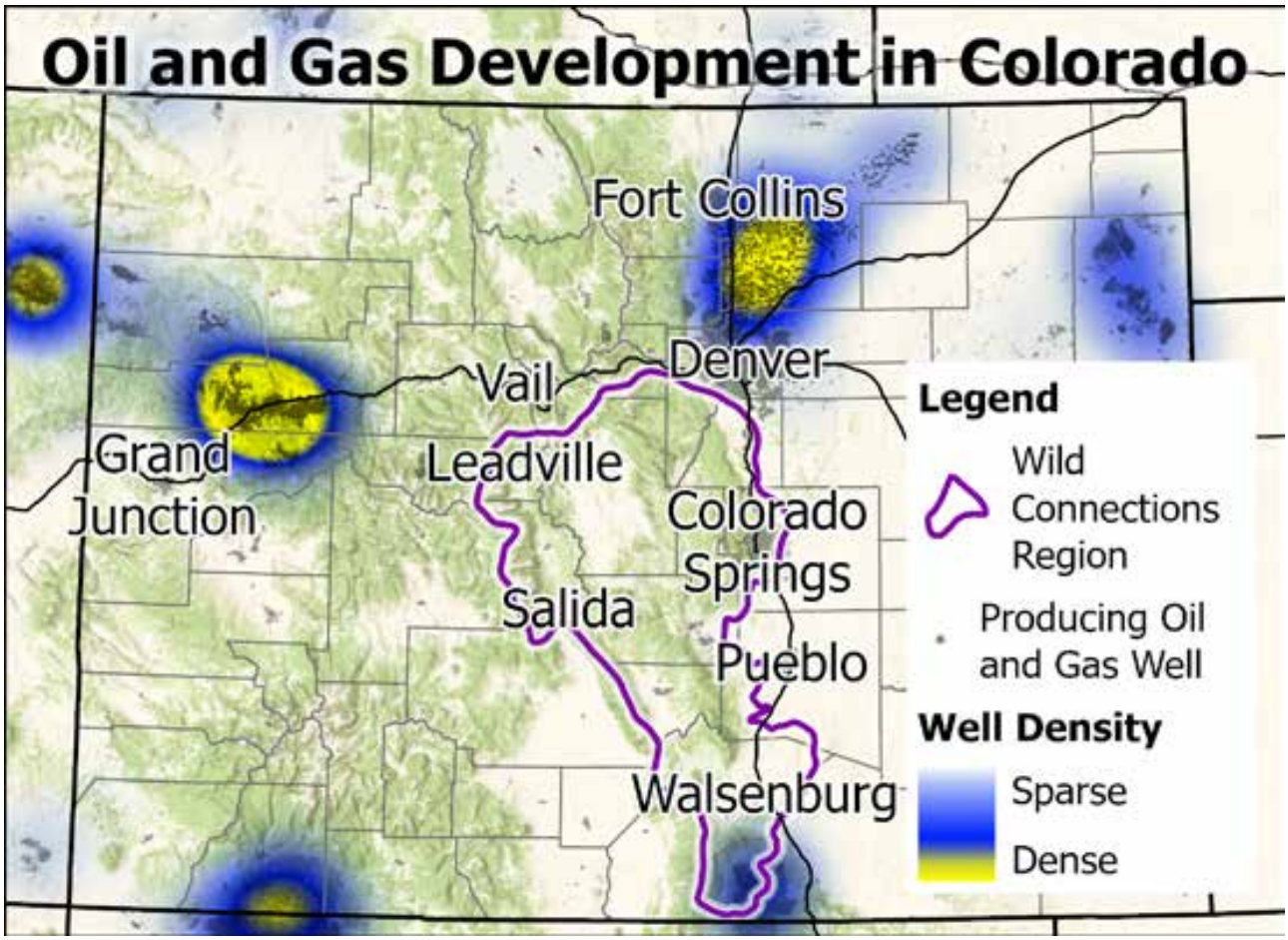
Energy Development Spotlight: Raton Basin and South Park

by Alison Gallensky

Early this spring, I crisscrossed the South Park region of Central Colorado several times. I enjoyed the expansive view as I descended from Kenosha Pass into the high mountain valley (one of several similar regions in Colorado known as "parks"). I appreciated the meanderings of the various forks and tributaries of the South Platte river. I smiled when I realized that what I thought was a group of horses was actually a herd of elk. What I didn't see were the signs of oil and gas development that are so evident along the northern Front Range.

If you look at a map of oil and gas development in Colorado, you will notice that there is a concentration of productive natural gas wells in the very southern portion of the Wild Connections region. This area, southwest of Walsenburg, extends into New Mexico and is called the Raton Basin. Oil and gas development in this area started in the 1970s and continues to the present day. Aerial views show a landscape fragmented by well pads and access roads.

The Bureau of Land Management identifies both the Raton Basin and South Park regions as having medium or moderate potential for oil and gas development. Why hasn't the South Park region been developed in the same way as the Raton Basin region?



Map of Oil and Gas Development in Colorado shows producing oil and gas wells in Colorado and adjacent states highlighting areas of high well density.
Map created by Alison Gallensky, 5/26/2025.
Data sources: Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Energy and Carbon Management Commission, ESRI, New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department, US Census Bureau, USGS, Utah Geospatial Resource Center, and Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

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Photo showing oil and gas development in the Raton Basin in the southern part of the Wild Connections region. The Spanish Peaks are shown in the background.
Photo: Bruce Gordon/EcoFlight shared on Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

Photo showing a view of South Park Colorado near Jefferson. While the oil and gas potential here is similar to that in the Raton Basin, the recently inalized Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan helps protect this iconic landscape.
Photo: Simon Foot shared on Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

2025 Restoration Projects

by John Sztukowski

Despite the turmoil that our local public land agencies are currently facing, we have scheduled two 2025 restoration projects in partnership with the Forest Service South Park Ranger District. The district staff continue to be dedicated stewards of the public lands and resources that they manage - guaranteeing upcoming projects despite their own future careers being less certain.

Thirtynine Mile Mountain Restoration Project

On July 12, Wild Connections, in partnership with the FS SPRD, hosted a volunteer restoration project to reclaim over two miles of decommissioned and illegal routes in the Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area. This roadless area is a winter refuge for elk, pronghorn and mule deer and is an important production area for elk calving. The project site is just south of Elevenmile Canyon Reservoir in South Park.

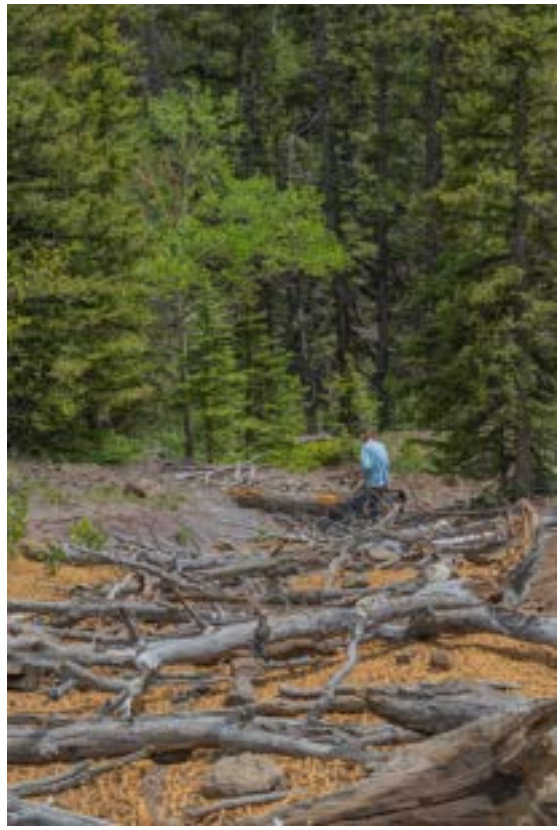
The route was decommissioned in accordance with the 2021 FS Pike-San Isabel Travel Management Plan. The route was in dire need of maintenance and only traversed a short distance to private property. So, the Forest Service flagged the route for final decommission in the travel management planning process. By closing and reclaiming this route, we have added 1,300 contiguous acres to the current 11,800-acre Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area!

The Forest Service prepared the project site for us. They ripped up the old tracks with a bulldozer and installed post and cable fencing to prevent future motorized travel. Wild Connections and volunteers then raked and seeded the old routes. We installed erosion mats to stabilize the steep eroding sections. Logs were carried in from nearby woodlands to help divert water across the steep tracks. We topped it off with a natural mulch of pine needles and duff to provide fertile cover for the seeds. Our volunteers worked tirelessly in the summer heat to complete the restoration. We had just enough time before the thunderstorms rolled in to finish the day with our traditional frozen treats.

We are grateful for our volunteers who travelled on the bumpy road and completed the hard work. Special thanks to our new volunteer Dillon Eldridge for capturing the action with his stunning photography. And mountains of thanks go to District Ranger Jeremy Schoonover, who continues to be champion for protecting wildlife habitat in the South Park area.

Thank You to our volunteers and partners at the Forest Service for making our July 12 Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area restoration project such a big success!.

Wild Connections Co-Executive Director India West and volunteer Josh VonLoh installing biodegradable erosion control netting on the decommissioned Forest Service route.



Wild Connections Co-Executive Director John Sztukowski on the reclaimed decommissioned route after volunteers installed erosion netting, seeded the route and dragged slash over it.

Puma Hills Roadless Area Phase II

Saturday, October 4, 2025
9am - 3pm

Last year, we successfully closed illegal motorized routes in the 8,800-acre Forest Service Puma Hills Roadless Area, just north of Elevenmile Canyon Reservoir in southern South Park.
In addition to supporting elk, pronghorn and mule deer, the Puma Hills Roadless Area provides nesting areas for American peregrine falcons and production areas for wild turkey. With the help of volunteers, we were able to seed and rake about a half a mile of closed routes over two areas. The project effectively closed over two and a half miles of illegal routes that traversed into the Puma Hills Roadless Area.

The South Park Ranger District recently reported that our 2024 project closures are holding strong! So, we have made plans for a Phase II project in October 2025, located just north of our 2024 project sites. We will be helping the FS install a short fence along a property line that sees a lot of illegal motorized trespass. We will seed and reclaim the illegal routes that enter the Roadless Area from that location, further protecting the nesting areas and wildlife habitat.

For more information and to register for the project, contact John Sztukowski at (817) 939-4239 or john@wildconnections.org.

Wild Connections Co-Executive Director John Sztukowski welcomes the group and gives an overview of the days restoration project area and goals.

Wild Connections volunteers raking in a native grass seed mix, reclaiming a user created route into the Thirtynine Mile Mountain Roadless Area.

Forest Service South Park Ranger District's Jeremy and Zach installing a step over gate for horses and hikers to still be able to access the decommissioned route.

Pages 8-9 Photo Credits: *A huge thanks to photographer, Dillon Eldridge, for donating all of his wonderful images from the event. You can follow his high-quality work on Instagram at @eldridge.photo*

“Energy Emergency” Threatens Public Lands

by Alison Gallensky

Over three quarters of Coloradans support protecting water, air, habitat, and recreation over energy development on national public lands. However, our Federal Government, including the President, Land Management Agencies, and Congress are doing the exact opposite. They are working to facilitate oil and gas development, bypass foundational environmental laws, and undermine efforts to fight climate change.

Immediately after taking office, the President issued a series of energy-focused executive orders – including one declaring a “National Energy Emergency” and one “Unleashing American Energy.” Experts agree, however, that there is no “Energy Emergency.” America is the world’s largest producer of oil and natural gas. Oil prices are so low that companies are shutting down drilling rigs and laying off workers. And the energy that the order seeks to “unleash” does not include renewable energy. Instead the executive order seeks to roll back the progress that America is making in producing clean energy. Those rollbacks could increase emissions of greenhouse gasses that contribute to climate change.

Our federal land managers are wholeheartedly following these misguided executive orders. Recently appointed Secretary of the Interior, Doug Burgum, issued a series of Secretarial Orders on February 3, signaling that federal agencies are focusing on oil and gas development. On May 8, the Bureau of Land Management issued instructions to fast track leasing national public lands for oil and gas development. These new procedures and others still in the works use the excuse of a “National Emergency” to bypass foundational environmental laws like the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Historic National Preservation Act.

Congress is also busy at work attempting to create new laws that prioritize oil and gas development. The budget reconciliation process allows slim majorities to pass legislation without fear of a Senate Filibuster. In May, the House of Representatives passed a reconciliation bill that includes provisions to further fast-track oil and gas development and hamper clean energy development. A very disturbing provision introduces a “Pay to Play” scheme where project sponsors can pay fees for accelerated environmental reviews while shielding them from judicial review. So the provision is prioritizing financial interests over environmental protection and public welfare. As of the beginning of June, 2025, the Senate has the opportunity to make changes to the legislation before it is finalized and signed into law.

Other proposed legislation is also in the works. As discussed elsewhere in this newsletter, Colorado Representative Hurd, joined by Colorado Representative Evans introduced the Productive Public Lands Act. Among other things, this would invalidate the land protections in the Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan. Wild Connections was an important part of the robust public input that created this plan. If this legislation is passed, among many other things, almost 750,000 acres would lose protection from oil and gas development including over a hundred thousand acres identified as having wilderness characteristics.

While I have described serious threats, please do not give up hope. First of all, the State of Colorado is continuing to work to protect clean water, clean air, and wildlife from irresponsible energy development. And Colorado continues to make progress in switching to renewable, clean energy. You can make a difference by staying informed making sure politicians know your priorities. Finally, rest assured that organizations like Wild Connections (and Alison’s employer, Rocky Mountain Wild) are committed to fighting to conserve the lands of the Upper Arkansas and South Platte watersheds and beyond.

Sources:

Colorado College, 1/2025, 2025 Conservation in the West Poll

Colorado Sun, 1/15/2025, Where does Colorado rank in the switch to clean, renewable energy?

Congress.gov, Introduced in House 3/10/2025, H.R.1997 - Productive Public Lands Act

Congress.gov, Introduced in House 5/20/2025, H.R.1 - One Big Beautiful Bill Act [Budget Reconciliation]

New York Times, 5/6/2025, There is No ‘Energy Emergency’ a New Lawsuit Claims

New York Times, 1/22/2025, Trump Sees National Emergencies Where Experts Say There are None

New York Times, 5/30/2025, U.S. Oil Companies are ‘Battening Down the Hatches’

U.S. Department of the Interior, 2/3/2025, Addressing the National Energy Emergency

U.S. Department of the Interior: Bureau of Land Management, 5/8/2025, Instructional Memorandum IM 2025-028, Oil and Gas Leasing – Land Use Planning and Lease Parcel Reviews

Standing Strong: Florissant Fossil Beds

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The passionate women behind the Defenders of Florissant: Estella Leopold, Bettie Willard, and Vim Wright Pictured at the 25th Anniversary celebration for the Monument. Photo: Florissant Fossil Beds NM

What can you do?

- Keep up to date with trusted sources such as The Guardian, PBS, and evidence-based reporting from local news sources. Do not get distracted by the latest fluff: keep your focus on actions that have long term consequences.
- Contact your Senators and Representatives often. Find your representatives at https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/CO.
- Attend your Congressperson's public forums prepared to ask tough questions.
- The website 5Calls.org provides updates on the latest issues, makes daily suggestions for calls, and provides sample scripts for your area. You can subscribe to get a weekly newsletter or install their app on your phone to make it easy to call your representatives.
- Be visible by joining in marches and public hearings. Many local groups organize days of action, and the 50501 Movement lists events by location. 50501 is short for "50 protests, 50 states, 1 movement."
- Share successes on your social media and by emails. We all need a boost of good news!
- Wild Connections has trusted sources in our partner agencies. Subscribe to our Wild News to stay up to date on developments in our region.
- Support our mission and staff with a donation. Do the same for other conservation organizations that are working daily to protect public lands.

These public lands belong to all the people. For an ordinary citizen, it's time to stand up, stand together, and stand strong. My voice, your voice, and all our voices are needed now! ♋

Thousands show up across Colorado to say, "Hands Off!" to Trump. Photo: Colorado Sun.

The Largest Threat to our Public Lands is Selling Them Off

Continued from page 3

Our public land management agencies, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park System and others have been systematically targeted to reduce staff and resources, and to inflict hardship on the dedicated federal workers that remain. Like the public lands sell-off and other initiatives from the second Trump administration, these despicable actions were laid out in Project 2025, the political manifesto aimed at reshaping the U.S. federal government to consolidate executive power and implement right-wing policies.

Over my 12+ years with Wild Connections, it is notable how much our local public land managers at the USFS and BLM have accomplished, given their already shrinking budgets and staff. However, in the past few months, we have seen several federal reductions in force, buy-out offers, stripping away job protections, hiring freezes, and reductions or eliminations of seasonal staff. In talking to our local public land managers, the trauma created by these actions is worse than the cuts themselves. Those few employees that remain on skeleton crews at our local management offices don't even have their jobs guaranteed for the future. Consequently, several of our long-standing local FS and BLM employees took the slim buy-out packages that were offered. The BLM Royal Gorge Field Office lost their top two career employees under the Field Manager, losing over 36 years of local institutional knowledge in the process. The FS Salida Ranger District lost their District Ranger and most of their recreational staff. That office now has two full-time recreation staffers, down from the typical 10-12 for the year (which used to include seasonal employees as well). Trauma infliction has been achieved: the losses to our local public land managers are noticeable.

Browns Canyon National Monument not only lost its Monument manager, but also the top two managers with the local FS. And while it is a priority for BLM to hire a new manager for BCNM, they said that it is likely a long way off due to the federal hiring freeze. Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument temporarily closed its office two days a week due to staff shortages. For similar reasons, the FS South Park Ranger District's office was closed completely, now open just two days a week.

Resource cuts have left our local public land managers scrambling as well. Restrictions on spending enacted earlier this year have forced managers to preemptively stock up on basic supplies like toilet paper, in efforts to keep bare-minimum public amenities open and functional. Public waste on public lands is always a serious concern, and the concern will be even greater this year. Additional spending restrictions limit gasoline for federal vehicles, restricting travel for some of the few boots that will be left on the ground.

Browns Canyon National Monument sign in the snow
*Photo: John Sztukowsk*i

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The Largest Threat to our Public Lands is Selling Them Off

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These overwhelming staff and resource shortages are already being felt, and will be exacerbated this summer, as the busy season for tourists and recreationists ramps up. There be fewer staff and resources to address and monitor the high volumes of public land use and abuse. There will be fewer patrols for public safety and abandoned campfires, an already high concern for the managing agencies and a leading cause of forest fires.

All of this is intentional. Our public land management agencies are being set up to fail. And it is directly connected to the sell-off of public lands. This federal administration, bad-faith supporters, and international corporations all want to show that these federal agencies are incapable of properly managing and stewarding our public lands. Thus, the public lands must be sold off to the state or other interested parties.

Our local public lands managers have emphasized the importance of partnerships with organizations like Wild Connections to be able to continue their work and missions. Your support of Wild Connections goes a long way to help protect our local public lands, their managers, and their wildlife inhabitants.

Sangres over Badger Creek South with tributaries
Photo: EcoFlight

Sangre de Cristo Mountains & Wet Mountain Valley over Arkansas River .
Photo: EcoFlight

Editors Note: *On July 4, H.R. 1, the reconciliation bill became law. Because of strong support from conservation advocates like you, provisions to sell off public lands (as described in the public lands sell-off article) were stripped from the bill. However the bill still fundamentally tipped the scales of public lands policy in favor of fossil fuels (as described in the energy development articles). Learn about how the bill makes 200+ million acres open to oil and gas leasing without restrictions here: http://bit.ly/46dozm1*

You're Invited!

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PROTECTING WILDLANDS

Wild Connections
Since 1995

Join us in honoring three decades of protecting Colorado's wildlands across the Arkansas and South Platte River watersheds. Connect with our community of staff, board members, and devoted volunteers as we commemorate this milestone and envision our future.

Saturday, September 27th, 2025

3:30pm-5:30pm

Fountain Creek Nature Center - 320 Pepper Grass Lane, Fountain, CO 80817

Featured Keynote: Ben Goldfarb
Ben is an independent journalist and author of *Crossings: How Road Ecology Is Shaping the Future of Our Planet*, named one of the best books of 2023 by the New York Times, and *Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter*, winner of the 2019 PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award

RSVP is Required

Stand Strong with Wild Connections
Monthly Giving for a Lasting Impact

Wild Connections thrives on the steady support of friends like you who make recurring donations. Your monthly gifts give us the reliable foundation we need to protect the beautiful wildlands of central Colorado that we all cherish. When you become a regular supporter, you help us plan confidently for the future—whether we're collaborating with public land agencies, advocating for wilderness protection, restoring critical habitats, or identifying climate resilient areas. Even a small monthly donation makes a big difference!

By joining our community of monthly donors, you become a vital partner in creating a protected wildlands network that will benefit generations to come. It's easy to set up, and you'll feel good knowing you're making a lasting impact every single month.

One scan, ongoing impact.
Start your recurring gift below.

Volunteers moving slash to help restore and protect our roadless areas that benefit wildlife movement. Photo: India West

Our mailing address has changed! For all checks and other mailed items, please use the following:

WILD CONNECTIONS
PO BOX 3061
COLORADO SPGS, CO 80934-3061

PO Box 3061
Colorado Springs, CO
80934-3061

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Green Mountain Meadow after restoration.
Photo: Lee Patton