

July 12, 2011

Tom Vilsack
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave. S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We, the undersigned Colorado hunting and fishing businesses and groups, are writing to request your commitment to and support of fish and wildlife conservation and our hunting and fishing traditions by developing a strong Colorado roadless rule that safeguards top quality habitat, the most valued hunting and fishing areas and the maximum acreage of public land fish and wildlife habitat.

Commonly known as backcountry, Colorado's 4.2 million acres of national forest roadless areas provide unique opportunities for sportsmen to pursue fish and game. Colorado has more elk and mule deer than any other state in the nation, a condition that has been enabled by the conservation of backcountry areas that provide "core habitat." Core habitat areas, where fewer disturbances to wildlife have been shown to maintain higher reproduction and survival rates in elk, allow wildlife managers to maintain strong wildlife populations. The benefits to hunting and fishing extend beyond roadless area boundaries: Backcountry lands help game species expand their ranges, thereby providing more opportunity for hunters on public lands throughout the state.

Backcountry areas are strongholds for the last remaining native trout in Colorado, offering unrivaled opportunities for anglers to fish for species such as Colorado River cutthroat, Rio Grande cutthroat and greenback cutthroat. The headwater streams and rivers that flow through roadless areas provide cover and refuge for these fish. Too much human disturbance and too many roads can increase sediment loads in waterways and lower the quality of spawning habitat, decreasing the likelihood that these native trout can be sustained. Conserving headwater streams and rivers in roadless areas increases downstream habitat quality and fishing opportunity, as well.

Hunting and fishing contribute more than \$1.8 billion annually to Colorado's economy and often form the backbone of our state's rural economies. Without strong safeguards that conserve public-lands backcountry, hunting and fishing opportunities could diminish and, likewise, the economic vitality of the businesses and communities that rely on them could decline. Conserving our valued roadless areas can sustain our economy and Western way of life.

On behalf of Colorado sportsmen, we thank you for your hard work and urge you to make every effort to conserve Colorado's backcountry traditions through a responsive and thorough Colorado roadless rule that maximizes the acreage and quality of public land fish and wildlife habitat being sustained in our national forests. A strong management document will ensure that hunting and fishing remain a fixture of living and recreating in Colorado.

Sincerely,

Organizations

Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance
Colorado Bowhunters Association
Colorado Trout Unlimited

Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Colorado Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Western Native Trout Initiative

Businesses

Al Ritt Flies
Anglers Covey Fly Shop
Angler's Roost Fly Fishing Company
Ark Anglers
Arkansas River Tours
Aspen Flyfishing Inc
Aspen Outfitting Co
B & L Quality Taxidermy
Basalt Firearms LLC
Bear's Archery, Guns and Prospecting
Bill Dvorak's Kayak and Rafting Expeditions
Bill Pellegrino's Archery Hut
Black Dog Inn
Blades-N-Bullets
Blue River Anglers
Bob's Fly Tying Specialties
Breckenridge Outfitters
Brothers Processing
Bucking Rainbow Outfitters
Clear Creek Outdoors
Cutthroat Anglers
Elephant Head Taxidermy
Elkhorn Fly Rod & Reel
Elkhorn Outfitters
Flattops Archery Supply
Flight-feather taxidermy
Fly Wheel
Front Range Anglers
Frying Pan Anglers
Gardenswartz Sports
Goods for the Woods
Greenback Alley
Gunnison River Expeditions
Gunnison River Pleasure Park
Gunsmoke Taxidermy
Hook Flyfishing
J's New and Used Sport
Kelley's Gunsmithing
Laughing Grizzly Fly Shop
Lines Hardware Companies
Mountain Angler
Mountain Pawn & Gun
North Rim Hunt Club
North Rim Trophy Hunts

Location

Longmont
Colorado Springs
Fort Collins
Salida
Cotopaxi
Aspen
Aspen
Steamboat Springs
Basalt
Glenwood Springs
Nathrop
Colorado Springs
Phippsburg
Canon City
Frisco
Loveland
Breckenridge
Craig
Steamboat Springs
Idaho Springs
Silverthorne
Golden
Loveland
Craig
Rifle
Loveland
Denver
Boulder
Basalt
Durango
Durango
Highlands Ranch
Delta
Lazear
Craig
Highlands Ranch
Salida
Meeker
Longmont
Nathrop
Breckenridge
Salida
Hotchkiss
Hotchkiss

Outlaw Bait & Tackle
Padilla's Mesa General Store
Roadrunner Bait
Roaring Fork Anglers
San Juan Anglers
Ski & Bow Rack
Sportsman Depot
St. Peter Fly Shop
Straightline Sports
Steamboat Flyfisher
Tenderfoot Lodge
The Blue Quill Angler
The Flysmith
Trophy Mount Care
Uncompahgre Hunt Club
Western Anglers
Winterhawk Outfitters
Wolf Creek Anglers

Colorado Springs
Mesa
Colorado Springs
Glenwood Springs
Durango
Pagosa Springs
Montrose
Fort Collins
Steamboat Springs
Steamboat Springs
Keystone
Evergreen
Cortez
Empire
Delta
Grand Junction
Collbran
Pagosa Springs