

Background Document

Summit and Eagle County Wilderness Preservation Act Background

The Summit and Eagle County Wilderness Preservation Act is legislation introduced by Congressman Jared Polis built off the recommendations of numerous local stakeholder groups in Summit and Eagle Counties in Colorado. This legislation is not a comprehensive wilderness bill, but legislation that represents select areas which have shown broad consensus. It is important to note that work will continue on other areas in Summit and Eagle counties to see what, if any, could be right for future legislation.

The proposed legislation takes into account an extensive public outreach effort as well as the examination of a separate ongoing citizen led wilderness proposal known as the Hidden Gems proposal. While the Hidden Gems proposal, and the many negotiations and changes made to it, has informed Congressman Polis' legislation, his bill is the product of a separate extensive examination and public outreach effort with local stakeholders from every perspective and public land user group. The proposed legislation represents only areas that have garnered a great deal of support and consensus throughout that process.

Because of this outreach effort, the Summit and Eagle County Wilderness Preservation Act attempts to include only areas that are undoubtedly right for legislation and are ready to go today. Furthermore, many of the below areas have undergone additional adjustments from previous proposals. These changes incorporate comments and concerns raised during ongoing consideration of the Hidden Gems proposal as well as changes made by Congressman Polis to reflect the input his office has received directly. Other areas will continue to be worked on and gain further input and undergo further changes, but this proposed legislation will ensure that select areas, currently ready and suitable for legislative action, aren't potentially held up because of unrelated challenges or an association with areas that still need more work and greater examination.

Congressman Polis' legislation represents his belief that all forms of recreation allow individuals and families to enjoy our public lands and experience the outdoors in their own way, and that Colorado's recreation economy has benefited our state economically, culturally and environmentally, replacing previously dominant extractive industries and creating quality jobs. This belief has been further cemented through local town forums and his personal examination of previous wilderness proposals. Recreational activities from mountain biking to motorized recreation and even hang gliding have been integrated into his legislation.

The Summit and Eagle County Wilderness Preservation Act preserves in perpetuity a number of pristine Colorado wild areas through both designating some of these areas as Wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964, and designating other areas that have outstanding community needs, as special management areas. This bill would designate approximately 81,790 new acres of wilderness, and preserve an additional 84,130 acres as special management areas or companion designations.

While the corresponding map should be consulted for boundary details, below is a brief overview of the areas under consideration with clarifications on issues or common confusions:

Areas to be designated as Wilderness

- Adam Mountain
 - Notes: No existing roads or bike trails are in this parcel.
- Williams Fork
 - Notes: Boundary accommodation made for hang gliding launch area. Hang gliding is permitted over the Wilderness area. Additional considerations were made for hunting access and for a mountain biking trail.
- Bull Gulch
 - Notes: Area is a Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Area which already carries the same management policies as Wilderness, and has been recommended to become wilderness by the BLM. We are continuing to work with the Colorado Army National Guard and look forward to engaging experts from the congressional committees to ensure the Guard's mission is unaffected by this legislation.
- Additions to the Holy Cross Wilderness: Woods Lake, West Lake Creek, No Name
 - Notes: There have been additional adjustments made to what is included in the Woods Lake, West Lake Creek, and No Name areas. No Name accommodation for ditch on Northern boundary for water provider (note this area is not located near Glenwood Springs, it is a different No Name). West Lake Creek accommodation for meadow in Big Park for winter motorized use. USFS recommended Wilderness area in Eagle County for Woods Lake is included.
- Additions to the Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness: Acorn Creek, Ute Pass and Ptarmigan A
 - USFS recommended Wilderness areas are included. Popular mountain biking route on Ptarmigan A is not included in the Wilderness.
- Additions to the Eagles Nest Wilderness: Freeman Creek, Spraddle Creek
 - Notes: Boundary adjustment in Freeman Creek for Eagle River Water and Sanitation for stream gauges. The access road to Eiseman Hut is not included in the wilderness. Spraddle Creek has garnered particularly positive feedback from the Division of Wildlife for its habitat.

Areas that have portions to be designated both wilderness and a Companion Designation or Special Management Area.

- Hoosier Ridge
 - Notes: Boundary accommodations for Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Companion area includes popular mountain biking trails which will remain open for their express use.
- Castle Peak
 - Notes: Boundary adjustment for motorized roads 8511 and 8512 for popular hunting and camping access. Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Area is included. Special Management Area currently accommodates Army helicopter training under agreements between the US Forest Service, BLM and Colorado Army National Guard. This legislation will maintain the current framework, ensuring that this training will not be impeded while also ensuring that our land managers have full autonomy to direct

activities on our federal lands. Furthermore, the legislation will allow the companion area to become full wilderness should the National Guard ever cease needing use of this area.

- Tenmile
 - Notes: Boundary adjustment for Wilderness designation which excludes numerous in-holdings from the proposal area. Companion area includes popular mountain biking routes which will remain open. The Companion area also includes legislative language to ensure that the bill will not affect any future needs CDOT may have in implementing solutions to I-70 congestion. As the companion area is within proximity to I-70, this legislation ensures that the Forest Service and CDOT can continue to work together on everything from land needs to avalanche or other unforeseen safety measures.

Areas that have only Special Management Areas

- Red Table
 - Notes: Accommodation for mountain bike trail, Reudi Overlook Trail, 3-1912.1 (Reudi Overlook Trail) connecting to 3-514.1 (Red Table Road/Trail). USFS Recommended Wilderness area. Special Management Area also takes into consideration the needs of local communities and concerns of state water providers. Special Management Area currently accommodates Army helicopter training under agreements between the US Forest Service, BLM and Colorado Army National Guard. This legislation will maintain the current framework, ensuring that this training will not be impeded while also ensuring that our land managers have full autonomy to direct activities on our federal lands.
- Pisgah Mountain
 - Notes: Boundary adjustment for a water pumping station. Special Management Area currently accommodates Army helicopter training under agreements between the US Forest Service, BLM and Colorado Army National Guard. This legislation will maintain the current framework, ensuring that this training will not be impeded while also ensuring that our land managers have full autonomy to direct activities on our federal lands. Furthermore, the legislation will allow the companion area to become full wilderness should the National Guard ever cease needing use of this area.
- Porcupine Gulch
 - Notes: Accommodation made for Arapahoe Basin Ski Area future avalanche control work area per the ski area's request. Boundary accommodation made on the western portion for an area of motorized winter use. Adjacent to the only land bridge crossing Interstate 70 for wildlife. The Special Management area also includes legislative language to ensure that the bill will not affect any future needs CDOT may have in implementing solutions to I-70 congestion. As the companion area is within proximity to I-70, this legislation ensures that the Forest Service and CDOT can continue to work together on everything from land needs to avalanche or other unforeseen safety measures.