

**Statement of Jerry Mallett
County Commissioner
District 2, Chaffee County, CO
Before the Roadless Areas Review Task Force
Public Participation Meetings,
Pike and San Isabel National Forests
January 6, 2006 Pueblo, Colorado**

Mr. George and members of the Task Force, I am Jerry Mallett, County Commissioner from Chaffee County. This evening I am here as an individual and sportsman. I am not representing the Chaffee County Commissioners. Given the short timeframe and the difficulty of getting current information on the roadless areas on the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, the Commission has not had the opportunity to analyze and develop a position on this very important matter. I have additional thoughts on the timing, availability of information, scope of recorded testimony and related concerns which I will address in another document at a later date.

For the past 52 years, I have hunted, fished, camped, backpacked, climbed and filmed extensively in both national forests. Having been born in Pueblo and growing up in Colorado Springs, these forests have served as important recreational, professional and economic resources during the past and will, I hope, well into the future.

In the early 1970's, I prepared the initial maps for the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE I) for the National Forests in the West. At that time, I was the Western Field Representative for the Wilderness Society. This initial work identified some 52 million acres of roadless lands within the National Forests outside of Alaska. As you know, ongoing research has identified additional roadless areas on the National Forests and all should be managed under Rule 201 until the individual Forest Plans are completed and implemented.

Many of these roadless areas were located in the Pike and San Isabel National Forests and, through excellent efforts from a number of sportsmen and conservation, civic and elected officials a number of key wilderness areas were established. However, a larger number of roadless areas have critical wildlife and watershed values and deserve ongoing roadless status and expanded boundaries.

I appreciate the limited time this evening and would like to summarize my comments in the general overview of the importance of the natural, wildlife and watershed values. I will submit a statement on specific individual roadless areas in the coming week. I request that my complete statement be made an official part of the Task Force Final Report.

Summary:

- 1) That all of the roadless areas remain under Rule 201 until Forest Plans are finalized.
- 2) Wildlife management be given high priority
- 3) Watershed and riparian resources be identified and protected.
- 4) Areas of major disturbance be restored.

Critical Wildlife Resources.

There is no question regarding the importance and connection of wildlife habitat to the continued protection and management of the roadless areas. Hunting, fishing and wildlife related activities contribute nearly \$3.5 billion dollars to the State's economy annually.

At the same time, Colorado continues to see a strong residential growth. The counties of Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Park, Teller and Pueblo are experiencing tremendous retirement and second or third home development. In nearly all cases, this development is taking place in historical and critical wildlife habitat. For this reason, the continued maintenance of these roadless areas under Rule 201 must be ongoing to avoid a serious decline in wildlife resources.

Elk, deer and bighorn sheep are key species that demand escape cover, winter range and habitat for spring crops of newborn. These roadless areas are the last vestiges of these domains. An excellent example was the recent announcement of the world record bighorn sheep found along the Arkansas River. Secluded habitat played a key role in this animal's life span. The roadless areas adjacent to Mt. Evans, Pikes Peak, Sangre De Cristos, Collegiate Peaks, Browns Canyon and other National Forest lands contribute heavily to the ongoing management of the State's wildlife icon. Hunters world-wide vie for the Grand Slam of the four record bighorn sheep in North America. In all cases, this is a lifetime pursuit and individuals will spend well over \$1 million dollars in this endeavor.

Because these areas are relatively small and are well accessed, management is going to be key. I recommend that prescriptive fire management be ongoing by the Forest Service. Many of these areas have serious programs with beetle infestation and the fuel wood buildup is extreme. There is very little, if any, commercial timber value in these forests. At the same time wildlife management will be critical. Proper treatment of bighorn sheep and other wildlife by the Division of Wildlife and the management for native fish should be continued.

At the same time, these roadless areas are recognized for their excellent harvest of elk and deer, along with an occasional Rocky Mountain goat, mountain lion and black bear. Sportsmen from the state and nationwide spend considerable time and dollars to enjoy hunting in both forests. These activities are on foot, horseback and off road vehicles, all allowed under the present roadless rule 201.

Wildlife resources are a major economic benefit to the six countries adjacent to these two forests.

County	Direct Expenditures	Total Impact	Jobs
Teller	\$4 million	\$7 million	100
Fremont	\$8.1 million	\$14.5 million	190
Custer	\$2.1 million	\$3.7 million	50
Park	\$6.8 million	\$11.9 million	170
Pueblo	\$30 million	\$53.4 million	710
Chaffee	\$15.6 million	\$ 27.6 million	380
Totals	\$66.6 million	\$118.1 million	1600

Source DOW Wildlife Values

Sportsmen are also very aware and supportive of all wildlife that can be found, viewed and appreciated in the national forests and the related roadless areas. Again, Colorado’s wildlife is being pushed to extremes by today’s ongoing developments. It is mandatory that the Department of Natural Resources, the Division of Wildlife, the Forest Service, along with the Governor’s office give the highest priority to protecting and maintaining the roadless nature of the roadless areas for the wide variety of wildlife species.

Watershed Management.

I certainly do not have to explain the importance of protecting, maintaining and enhancing all sources of Colorado’s water and watersheds to this Task Force, the entities along the Front Range or to the people of the State in general. Colorado is the headwaters state with over 30 major rivers with their source in the National Forests and Rocky Mountain National Park. During the RARE I analysis, the EPA stated that over 16,000 streams, creeks and rivers found their source in these roadless areas and, as a result, all should be protected.

Colorado’s watersheds are beyond priceless! And those under discussion today began in the roadless areas of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests. There are hundreds of high mountain lakes and thousands of high quality streams that do have their source in these roadless areas. It is a well-known fact that a stream or river is no better than its headwater source.

The classic examples are the Pikes Peak and Colorado Springs watershed, Mount Evans, and the headwaters of the South Platte river. Many of the higher streams contain a variety of cutthroat trout, the “canary in the mine’ to the quality of streams and watersheds.

While we may disagree and discuss the various methods of transmountain water projects, Recreational Inchannel Diversions and storage projects, very few will oppose the protecting of these headwaters sources as the highest and best management practices.

Outdoor Recreation, Colorado's Lifestye Economy

Prior to being elected as County Commissioner, I was the founder and president of the Adventure Travel Society. This international consulting firm worked with developing countries, the World Bank and other international financial institutions in the analysis, management and marketing of outdoor adventure, heritage and cultural resources. All the countries and institutions that I worked with viewed the United States and, in particular, Colorado, as the baseline and standard for outdoor recreation. In the U.S. outdoor recreation generates over \$224 billion dollars in travel, equipment, lodging and other related activities annually. Colorado realizes nearly \$6 billion from outdoor recreation of winter sports, river running, mountain biking, hiking, horseback rides, scenic drives and off road activities in addition to the approximate \$3.5 billion from wildlife resources.

I mentioned earlier that residential development is a major impact on wildlife resources. It is the very resources that we are discussing today that bring these folks and their money to the state. Chaffee County alone sees over \$125 million dollars from outdoor recreation in a non drought year. Hunting, fishing, river running, skiing, mountain biking and other outdoor activities are completely dependent on the natural resources of the San Isabel National Forest and its roadless components. Colorado's climate, outstanding natural resources, relatively safe environment and remote natural disasters are proven and important marketing tools. Colorado citizens, either native or recent, demand proper and long term management of the natural resources directly related to the National Forest roadless areas.

As a sportsmen, hunter, business person and elected official, I strongly urge this Task Force to consider the continued management of the roadless areas in the Pike and San Isabel National Forests under Rule 201 and to include the additions from other groups.

Recommendations for Individual Roadless Areas to be submitted by January 10, 2006