

January 23, 2006

To: The Keystone Center  
ATTN: Roadless Areas Review  
1628 Sts. John Road  
Keystone, CO 80435

Dear Colorado Roadless Area Task Force,

We would appreciate it if you would include the following comments in the public record on behalf of the Arkansas River Outfitters Association (AROA). AROA, is a non-profit group of over 30 outfitters, and represents over 70% of all commercial use on the Arkansas River. The Arkansas River has become the most popular river for whitewater boating in Colorado and the United States. Our industry accounts for over \$25 million in direct expenditures for a total economic impact of over \$65 million in the Arkansas Valley annually.

AROA would like to see Governor Owens protect all of Colorado's roadless areas. Protecting these last unroaded areas makes sense in order to preserve recreational opportunities now and for future generations, protect key wildlife habitat, enhance our economy and to preserve our Western heritage. Roadless areas contribute to healthy watersheds which serve as the lifeblood of AROA's members. Many of the roadless areas in Chaffee County help to provide the backdrop our rafting customers have come to expect and enjoy. As we all know in Colorado, water resources are increasingly on the minds of citizens. Doing all we can now to protect the watersheds for the future of Colorado is a paramount responsibility of the agencies charged with managing our public resources. Roadless areas provide some of the best possible protection of watershed quality. Please help us preserve our natural resources and a vital part of our regional economy.

Some of the roadless areas that we would like to highlight include the Aspen Ridge, Kneutzer-Princeton, and Mount Antero Roadless Areas. These areas help to provide an amazing backdrop for our rafting customers and residents alike, help keep our watersheds healthy, provide unique opportunities for people to hike and enjoy some of Colorado's premiere backcountry and contain several internationally renowned fourteen-thousand foot peaks.

**Aspen Ridge Roadless Area:** The Aspen Ridge Roadless Area is one portion of the proposed Browns Canyon Wilderness. AROA is a long-standing supporter of the Browns Canyon Wilderness Proposal and has worked for many years with other local stakeholder groups to craft a fair and well-supported Browns Canyon Wilderness proposal. Aspen Ridge affords amazing views in all directions and contains aspens and pines that delight visitors and local citizens.

**Kneutzer-Princeton Roadless Area:** This roadless area contains Mount Kneutzer, the Gladstone Ridge and Mount Princeton (14,197 feet). The views from these high peaks and ridges are spectacular. The high alpine areas include forests of spruce-fir, lodgepole pine, aspen and Douglas-fir. The roadless areas also contains rich riparian habitat. There are historical records of greenback cutthroat trout in Mineral Basin. This roadless area contains outstanding lynx habitat and important lynx linkages at Cottonwood pass. Additionally, this roadless area contains elk, elk production areas and mountain goat production areas and winter range. Peregrine falcon, boreal toads and many rare plant species are also located here.

**Mount Antero Roadless Area:** The Mount Antero Roadless Area contains several high peaks including two fourteen-thousand foot peaks—Mount Antero (14,269 feet) and Mount Shavano (14,229 feet)—as well as White Mountain and Jones Peak. Once again, these peaks are all clearly visible from the Arkansas River Valley and help provide the backdrop for our rafting clients. While much of this area is alpine tundra, the conservation community's roadless inventory has extended the boundaries and therefore the area contains more ponderosa and lodgepole pine, aspen, Douglas-fir and spruce-fir. The roadless area provides habitat for black bear, mountain lion, deer, elk, mountain goats, and bighorn sheep. The roadless area is home for some rare ferns, Colorado larkspur, red columbines and boreal toads.

In summary, protecting Colorado's roadless areas just makes sense for our economy, recreation, wildlife, watersheds and our heritage. The AROA Board of Directors thanks you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration of these suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Neinas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "A".

Andy Neinas  
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