

To: Hon. Bill Owens, Governor of Colorado, and the Roadless Area Review Taskforce

From: Colorado Sportsmen United for Public Lands Protection

November 14, 2005

Dear Governor Owens and Roadless Taskforce members:

We write regarding the ongoing Roadless Rule revisions process.

With this open letter to Governor Owens, the Roadless Area Review Taskforce, and the citizens of Colorado, we, the undersigned hunter, angler, and outfitter associations – cooperating ad hoc as the non-partisan **Colorado Sportsmen United for Public Lands Protection**, speak not only for our collective thousands of members, but also for countless unaffiliated Colorado outdoorsmen and women who share our concerns. Collectively, we urge you to petition the USDA to protect in perpetuity every possible acre of Inventoried Roadless National Forest land in Colorado. Today, only 8 percent of the national forest acreage in Colorado lies beyond one mile of a road (only 4 percent for BLM lands). To spoil any portion this last remaining fragment of our state's greatest treasure for short-term economic gains would be morally, economically, ecologically, and politically disastrous.

All hunters and anglers benefit from roadless public lands, whether we ever venture into the backcountry or not. Consequently, the futures of hunting, fishing, outfitting, and other backcountry activities, together with the significant benefits they bring to our state's celebrity, dignity, and economic welfare, depend on maintaining Colorado's last remaining islands of unspoiled public wildlands intact. Please consider a few examples:

- Numerous fish and game species inhabit and depend on every roadless area in the state. But for example's sake, Colorado's flagship big game animal is the elk. More than half of all elk summer concentration habitat on public lands in Colorado – peaceful retreats where cows raise newborn calves, bulls maximize antler growth, and all elk acquire the nutritional reserves necessary for winter survival – are in roadless areas.
- Elk and other big game seek out quiet, secure, well-forested habitat because they *need* it. Similarly, unroaded backcountry provides male elk, mule deer, and other big game the escape cover

necessary to live long enough to grow trophy-quality antlers or horns. (The two top state record mule deer bucks both came from National Forest roadless areas.) No surprise, the finest hunting to be had is found in road-free backcountry. Likewise, healthy wildlife populations and a sound genetic future for Colorado's big game animals depend significantly on the availability of backcountry escape cover. Moreover, since wild animals move frequently, particularly during the hunting seasons, even hunters who never venture far from roads benefit from the "trophy pump" effects of unroaded backcountry habitat.

- The cold, clean streams critical to the welfare of all three imperiled subspecies of native Colorado cutthroat trout head in or flow through unroaded public lands. Likewise, the headwaters of Colorado's most celebrated trout fisheries head in or flow through road-free public lands. Roads cause erosion and greatly increase sediment, fill pools, damage riparian areas, reduce shade, raise water temperatures, and harm fisheries in many additional ways. Consequently, even anglers who never fish backcountry waters enjoy a bounty of benefits flowing down from wild, unroaded watersheds above.
- Hunting and angling in Colorado comprise a \$1.5 billion (conservative figure) annual industry with strong growth potential, with the bulk of this sustainable and diffused fortune flowing from nonresident visitors into hard-pressed rural economies. Non-motorized backcountry recreation is a clean, sustainable, and socially, ecologically, and financially essential industry that would be crippled, stifled, and in many places destroyed by opening the last remaining fragments of nonwilderness wildness in Colorado to commercial development and additional motorized access. (Many "roadless" areas in fact have non-system roads and/or ORV trails.)

In closing, Governor Owens, this is an opportunity for you to crown your leadership of Colorado with a legacy of wild and beautiful, ecologically healthy, economically productive public lands. No road closures or "lock-out" is involved. All we, the hunters and anglers of Colorado, are asking of you and the Taskforce is to sustain the status quo – keep things as they are right now -- by keeping intact what we have left of truly wild public lands. As population pressures increase and remnants of pristine nature continue to be chopped up, developed, and motorized, the demand for quiet, natural outdoor destinations and traditional muscle-powered backcountry recreation

will also grow. Please help us protect this precious resource for Coloradoans and America, for present and future generations, while keeping alive the traditional customs and culture of the rural West. The hunters, anglers, and outfitters of Colorado, will be openly grateful.

Sincerely,

Colorado Sportsmen United for Public Lands Protection:

Colorado Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Colorado Mule Deer Association
Colorado Outfitters Association
Colorado State Muzzle Loading Association
Colorado Trout Unlimited
Colorado Wildlife Federation
Izaak Walton League of America
National Wildlife Federation
Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep Society

cc: Hon. Mike Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture
Mark Rey, Undersecretary of Agriculture
Rick Cables, Regional Forester, USFS
Colorado USFS Forest Supervisors
Bruce McClosky, Director, CDOW
Jim Goodyear, Roadless Taskforce liason, CDOW
Hon. Wayne Allard, U.S. Senate
Hon. Ken Salazar, U.S. Senate
Hon. Diana DeGette, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Mark Udall, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. John Salazar, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Marilyn Musgrave, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Joel Hefley, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Thomas Tancredo, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Bob Beauprez, U.S. House of Representatives
Hon. Jim Isgar, Colorado State Senate
Hon. Kathleen Curry, Colorado House of Representatives
Hon. Josh Penry, Colorado House of Representatives