

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands  
Hearing on Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act (HR 2334)  
November 13, 2007  
Statement of Senator Wayne Allard

Thank you Chairman Grijalva and Rankin Member Bishop, for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today, and for the committee's consideration of the Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act.

I am pleased to come before the Committee today to discuss legislation that will designate Rocky Mountain National Park as Wilderness.

This legislation is the result of more than a year of negotiations between members of the Colorado Delegation. It is a carefully crafted bill involving thousands of hours of work with citizens, local elected officials and the environmental community.

This legislation will provide further protection for an area that was formed millions of years ago when massive glaciers carved an impressive landscape. The Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act will ensure that it remains unchanged in years to come.

As a fifth generation Coloradan, and someone who grew up in the shadow of Rocky Mountain National Park, it is an honor to have worked on this bill with Congressman Udall and Congresswoman Musgrave.

Colorado and its Congressional representatives have long played an important role in the development of Wilderness in our Nation.

This dates back to the original Wilderness Act. Congressman Wayne Aspinall, who represented Colorado's 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional district and chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, played a pivotal role in creating the nation's wilderness system with the 1964 Wilderness Act.

From the inception of the original Wilderness Act through the continued development of Wilderness in Colorado one thing has remained the same: a commitment to working together to find compromise and solutions that work for everyone.

The principle of compromise has held true from the Colorado National Forest Wilderness Act of 1980 to the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Act in 2000, and it is now true with the Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act of 2007.

This is reflected by the broad support this bill enjoys. Everyone from water users to the environmental community support this bill.

There is one exception to this nearly universal support. I understand that the administration has expressed concern about the water protection language we included protecting the Grand River Ditch. I understand these concerns are based on the idea that this is an atypical section for a Wilderness designation.

During my extensive tenure in both houses of Congress I have been a part of numerous Wilderness designations. The one and only common factor with these Wilderness designations is that none of them were typical.

When I worked to designate the Spanish Peaks Wilderness we had to cherry stem the Bulls Eye Mine Road. A cherry stemmed road in a wilderness area is not typical but in this case it was necessary to its creation.

In regard to a Wilderness designation for Rock Mountain National Park I can say unequivocally that without the protections for the Grand River Ditch there can be no designation.

In a time when agricultural wells are being threatened just east of the Park in Weld and Morgan Counties, the protection of water is more important than ever.

The 40,000 acre feet or over 13 billion gallons of water that flow through the Grand River Ditch are important to both rural Colorado and urban areas outside of Denver that depend on this water to meet municipal needs.

The protection of this water infrastructure is a key component of this compromise legislation. If we do not recognize and protect the water provided by the Grand Ditch this bill can not move forward.

Protecting this water is vital to preserving this area's agricultural heritage and its future as well as green acres and preserved habitat outside of Rocky Mountain National Park.

I am extremely pleased that this bill as written will protect wilderness and respect water rights.

The Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act will ensure that Americans, now and in the future, have the ability to enjoy the Park. Thank you Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, for your consideration of the Rocky Mountain National Park Wilderness Act.