



August 22, 2018

RE: S.2721, the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act.

Trout Unlimited supports the San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act (S.2721). This bill, the result of over 15 years of local community collaboration, includes important protections for the headwaters of the San Miguel, the Uncompahgre and the Animas watersheds. It also includes protections for some of the state's most iconic peaks including Mount Sneffels and Wilson Peak.

As a leading advocate for the conservation of fish and wildlife habitats we enthusiastically support the 61,000 acres of protections that are included in the bill. As the bill proceeds through the Congressional process we would like to highlight the importance of protected public lands to the broader sportsmen's community and the outdoor recreation industry. These lands are critically important for many resources including fish, wildlife, recreation, and watersheds. In Colorado, hunters, anglers and wildlife viewers had a \$5.1 billion economic impact in 2017, and residents of Colorado's 3rd congressional district spend an estimated \$2.2 billion on recreation each year. Public land, specifically protected places, are bedrocks of these industries.

The San Juan Mountains Wilderness act would protect the headwaters of the San Miguel, Uncompahgre, and Animas watersheds. Although the bill's footprint would directly protect 2.5 miles of Colorado River cutthroat trout habitat, and 17 total river miles, the cumulative downstream impacts is far greater. Fish and wildlife in the area would benefit from the proposed designation, and migration corridors for elk, deer, and rocky mountain bighorn sheep would be prioritized and protected. Some of the best hunting and fishing in the state would be protected for future generations because of this bill.

The conservation of these important areas in the San Juan mountains enjoys widespread support from local communities, businesses, county and city elected officials. These critical waterways provide outstanding benefits for the region's residents, critical habits for fish and wildlife, and provide significant economic benefits for local communities. We look forward to working to pass this bill and gain needed protections for these important areas.

For questions related to these comments, please contact the following:

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