



Colorado's Most Iconic Wildlands Face Mounting Pressure, New Report Finds

"Wild for Good" identifies ten at-risk landscapes in need of urgent protections to safeguard wildlife, water and climate resilience

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CARBONDALE, Colo. — Colorado's rivers, forests and open spaces that supply drinking water, sustain wildlife and anchor the state's outdoor economy are facing increasing threats by extractive development and short-sighted policy decisions, according to a [new report from Wilderness Workshop](#). The analysis, *Wild for Good*, identifies ten landscapes across western Colorado — including the [Crystal River](#), [Thompson Divide](#) and [Dolores River Canyon Country](#) — where wildlife habitat, migration corridors and clean water are at risk.

"Public lands are part of Colorado's identity, and once they're gone, they're gone forever," said **Will Roush, Executive Director of Wilderness Workshop**. "This report is both a warning and a roadmap. It identifies specific steps we can take now to keep our most treasured wild places intact for future generations."

Colorado has a long history of public-led conservation — from the creation of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness to community-driven efforts to defend the Thompson Divide. The new report situates the next generation of land conservation in that tradition, highlighting opportunities for local communities to work together toward a shared vision for protected public lands.

"We've been hearing loud and clear from our local communities a strong desire to take proactive action to protect the places we love," said **Michael Gorman, Campaign Director at Wilderness Workshop**. "Permanent protection for the public lands and waters we care about is the best way to ensure these places remain wild for good. We're calling for bold leadership to secure the protections local communities have been calling for."

Advocates say the same rivers and forests that make Colorado extraordinary are now in the crosshairs of extractive industries and privatization proposals. The report outlines what's at stake: migration corridors for elk, mule deer and Canada lynx; forests that store carbon and buffer the state against drought and wildfire; clean water supplies that sustain towns and farms; and outdoor spaces that draw visitors and fuel Colorado's economy.

Supporter Quotes

Below are quotes from community leaders in support of protecting the Wild for Good landscapes. Additional quotes for each landscape are available in the [Community Voices section of the website](#).

“We are here to protect nature, to cherish wilderness. When we hear the elk bugling we know we are in a sacred place. We are stewards of this land. Protecting these landscapes protects our water, our communities and the outdoor recreation we all depend on.” - **Jeffrey Woodruff, Vice-Chair, Pitkin County Commission**

“Here in Eagle County, we live, work and spend time with family and friends in communities that depend on the clean water, healthy forests and outdoor opportunities our public lands provide. These places are more than scenic backdrops — they are the beating heart of our way of life and are deeply cherished by our community. From the wildlife corridors that sustain elk and mule deer, to the rivers that feed our farms and towns, to the trails and open spaces that bring us peace and adventure, Western Colorado’s lands sustain us all.” — **Geoff Grimmer, Council Member, Town of Eagle**

“Coloradans today enjoy public lands because earlier generations had the foresight to act for their permanent protection. Without their hard work, places like the Maroon Bells or Longs Peak could look very different today. We have a responsibility to safeguard the wildlands that remain so that spectacular places like the Dolores River Canyon Country and the Colorado River Valley remain a part of a shared public land heritage for generations to come.” — **Soren Jespersen, Director of the Colorado Wildlands Project**

“As an organic farmer in the North Fork Valley, I’ve seen that clean water, clean air and a thriving ecosystem are what allow me to provide nourishing food to communities across Colorado. The public lands surrounding this valley supply our water and keep our air clean. They are the ecosystem we benefit from. Protecting these resources is essential to ensuring the future of organic farming in our region.” — **Mark Waltermire, farmer, educator and founder of Thistle Whistle Farm in Paonia, CO**

“The Homestake Wetlands are vital to the life of Colorado’s West Slope and Front Range. Not as water in a dam or a pipe but rather as wetlands evolved to be – a rich mosaic of flooded soils and vegetation that is the life of the west. In the high desert that is Colorado, wetlands temporarily store the water that maintains stream flows throughout the year. Wetlands create the habitat that enables the survival of thousands of birds, the breeding grounds for the fish that bring our rivers alive and the refugia for elk during calving season.” — **Delia Malone, retired ecologist for the Colorado Natural Heritage Program**

Ten Landscapes in *Wild for Good*

1. [Colorado River Valley](#)
Stretching along the headwaters of the Colorado River, this valley is critical for supplying water to farms, cities and wildlife across the West. The area faces pressure from development and rising water demands.
2. [Continental Divide](#)
The high spine of the Rockies forms a corridor for wildlife and a source of clean water. Increasing development and recreation pressures threaten the connectivity and resilience of this landscape.

3. [Crystal River](#)
Flowing north from the Elk Mountains into the Roaring Fork, the Crystal is one of the last undammed rivers in Colorado. Its watershed supports fish, farms and recreation but remains unprotected from new development.
4. [Dolores River Canyon Country](#)
Canyonlands in western Colorado shelter rare desert plants, ancient cultural sites and habitat for bighorn sheep and raptors. Hardrock mining impacts and unmanaged motorized vehicle use continue to threaten the landscape.
5. [Greater Dinosaur](#)
Bordering Dinosaur National Monument, this expanse of canyons, mesas and habitat supports elk, pronghorn and paleontological treasures. Energy leasing threatens its wild character.
6. [Homestake Valley](#)
Nestled in the central Rockies, Homestake holds wetlands and high-country meadows that are key for wildlife and water supplies. The valley faces proposals for new dams and water diversions.
7. [North Fork Valley](#)
Known for organic farms and vineyards, the North Fork also borders wildlands rich in wildlife habitat. Oil and gas leasing continues to pose a risk to the valley's economy and environment.
8. [Red Table Mountain](#)
Rising between the Roaring Fork and Eagle valleys, Red Table Mountain offers prime elk habitat and sweeping views. Its intact forests are at risk from logging and motorized expansion.
9. [Roan Plateau](#)
An ecological crossroads above the Colorado River, the Roan Plateau hosts rare plants, waterfalls and rich wildlife habitat. Oil and gas development has long threatened this plateau's fragile ecosystems.
10. [Thompson Divide](#)
Southwest of Carbondale, Thompson Divide is beloved for its hunting, grazing and recreation opportunities. Local communities have fought for years to protect it from drilling proposals.

The [Wild for Good report](#) is being released in conjunction with [National Public Lands Day](#). It details threats and opportunities for ten landscapes across western Colorado, with stories, maps and photos available at wildforgood.org.

High-resolution [images](#), [map](#), and [b-roll video](#) available.

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Wilderness Workshop is the conservation watchdog of Colorado's Western Slope. Since 1967, the organization has secured permanent protections for nearly half a million acres of public lands while defending wildlife, waters and wild places from destructive development.