

Final Public Lands Sign-On

Dear [CO Fed. Delegation]

We, the undersigned local elected officials representing communities across Colorado, write to you with urgency in order to protect our state's public lands. These lands support our local economies and natural landscape in countless ways; from tourism and recreation to wildfire mitigation of wildfire risk and watershed health, public lands are central to the overall well-being of our Colorado communities.

In light of the passage of the budget reconciliation bill, serious cuts were made to critical programs that support sustainable management and ensure the longevity of our national parks and other public lands. Several [sections](#), in particular, will have deeply harmful effects on our state:

- **Cuts to Forest and Wildfire Resilience Programs (Section 10201):** Colorado communities are on the frontlines of increasingly intense and frequent wildfires. Cutting them increases risk for rural and mountain towns, causes detrimental impacts on air and water quality in our metro areas, burdens local fire departments, and undercuts proactive land management efforts.
- **Mandates Public Land Oil and Gas Leasing (Section 50101):** Forcing oil and gas leasing on public lands in Colorado undermines local decision-making, threatens wildlife corridors, and our tourism-based economies.
- **Eliminates River and Climate Data Programs (Section 40008):** Colorado is a headwaters state for most of the west. Accurate climate and hydrologic data are essential to managing the Colorado River Basin and forecasting drought. Eliminating these programs jeopardizes water security for millions of users and undermines scientific decision-making in agriculture, municipal planning, and wildfire preparedness.
- **Requires Unsustainable Timber Sales (Section 50302):** Mandating timber sales regardless of ecological or market conditions disregards science-based forest management and increases the risk of long-term forest degradation. Colorado's forests are already stressed by drought and bark beetle infestations—this provision would further erode their health and resilience.
- **Discourages Clean Energy on Public Lands (Section 50303):** Colorado is a leader in the transition to renewable energy, with vast potential for wind and solar on public lands. Provisions that erect new barriers or disincentivize clean energy leasing contradict our state's climate goals and stifle job creation in the renewable sector.
- **Cuts to National Park Staffing and Climate Resilience (Section 50305):** National parks like Rocky Mountain, Mesa Verde, and Great Sand Dunes are cornerstones of Colorado's identity and economy. Reduced staffing impacts visitor safety, resource protection, and infrastructure maintenance—just as record-breaking visitation puts more strain on these parks. At the same time, climate resilience funding is crucial to adapt to heat, drought, and wildfire risks that are already affecting our landscapes and communities.

Our vision for a vibrant Colorado is anchored in investing in public lands as a shared resource for local economic growth, equitable outdoor access, and climate resiliency. These cuts both open our public lands to harmful private development and discourage supportive land management that ensure our public lands remain vibrant and open to all.

In light of these concerns, we request the following actions:

1. Work to preserve funding for local infrastructure, public transit, and forest management.
2. Engage in meaningful local consultation, particularly in rural, Indigenous, and historically marginalized communities, before any changes to land use policy.
3. Reject any future funding cuts to the U.S. Forest Service's Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program, the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, and other federal forest health and wildfire mitigation programs critical to Colorado communities.
4. Commit to opposing any mandate that forces the Department of the Interior to lease public lands for fossil fuel extraction regardless of demand, environmental review, or local input.
5. Restore and safeguard funding for programs like the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS), USGS stream gauges, and NOAA climate monitoring tools.
6. Remove provisions that require arbitrary timber harvest targets on public lands, especially those that override scientific forest management or community input.
7. Oppose any new fees, leasing hurdles, or policies that disadvantage solar, wind, and other renewable energy projects on public lands.
8. Fully fund the National Park Service to ensure proper staffing, maintenance, and visitor services at Colorado's parks.

Colorado's public lands are not just economic assets - they are enduring pillars of our community, biodiversity refuges, and climate buffers. The consequences of the sale and privatization of this land will be incalculable for our Colorado communities and climate.

We hope you will stand with Colorado communities, future generations, and our shared values by opposing this provision. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss how federal land and infrastructure investments can support healthy, equitable, and resilient communities.

Sincerely,