**Time to Pass the CORE Act in the Senate**

The U.S. Congress has an important opportunity to score a huge win for conservation this year, by passing the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy (CORE) Act as part of this year’s national defense bill. Alongside many of our neighbors, sportspeople, ranchers, veterans, and small business owners, we have worked for more than a decade to pass this bill. It’s up to the U.S. Senate to get it across the finish line this year, and thankfully we have strong leadership from our own Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper, who sits on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

We know this land personally and its historical significance, and many of us have been working for decades to protect the Thompson Divide and the San Juan Mountains. Colorado’s public lands are so important to our family as our grazing permit is located within the proposed Whitehouse Addition to the Mt. Sneffels Wilderness. Our cattle operation relies on healthy and protected lands and waters for our business to succeed, as do fellow ranchers grazing their livestock on the Thompson Divide.

In addition to protecting the Thompson Divide and the San Juan Mountains, the CORE Act would designate Camp Hale as our nation’s first National Historic Landscape. Our father, William Tyler Clarke, and our uncle, Brian Warner Clarke Jr., trained at Camp Hale as part of the Army’s storied 10th Mountain Division, which trained in harsh conditions to prepare for mountain warfare in WWII. After coming home from war, many of the 10th Mountain veterans were consequential in creating the modern-day outdoor recreation economy we all know and appreciate. Preserving Camp Hale would honor veterans and their families, and protect a landscape that constitutes a piece of our country’s cultural and military history.

Passing the CORE Act as part of the defense bill would be fitting, given the Camp Hale designation, and it would follow in the footsteps of Hermosa Creek, the fishing haven that was protected as part of the defense bill in 2015.

It’s important to pass this legislation not just to protect Camp Hale, but also the surrounding public lands and wild places that give veterans opportunities for outdoor recreation and solitude. That’s what the CORE Act does. This legislation enjoys incredibly strong local support, including from ranching and veteran families like ours. We urge Congress to pass the CORE Act this year.

Liza Clarke Mallory Clarke

Owner, Ferguson Family Ranches Ridgway

Ridgway

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