**Sportsmen and women support the CORE Act**

To the editor:

When I worked for the United States Forest Service, I had first-hand experience of what makes our Nation great: our vast tracts of public lands and the fish and wildlife that live on those wild lands for all of us to enjoy.  That’s why upon leaving the Forest Service, I came to my current role with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers - the sportsman’s voice for our public lands and waters. There’s a direct link from large swathes of land, protected from development, to healthy populations of game and fish. Wildlife and fish, in turn, attract hunters and anglers like me who help support our local economies.

That is why I was pleased when Colorado’s U.S. Senator Michael Bennet and U.S. Congressman Joe Neguse introduced the Colorado Outdoor Recreation & Economy (CORE) Act during January 2019. The CORE Act unites and improves four previously introduced bills: San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act; Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act; Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act; and Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act.  In total, the CORE Act will protect some 400,000 acres of public lands across Colorado and nearly 61,000 acres in the heart of the San Juans.

The San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act portion of this bill is the result of more than 10 years of collaboration among local leaders, businesses and ranchers in San Miguel, San Juan and Ouray Counties.

Unfortunately, Rep Tipton and Senator Gardner have not co-sponsored the CORE Act.  A competing proposal submitted by Rep.Tipton fails to protect unique landscapes like Camp Hale and the Thompson Divide supported by his constituents, and actually releases protection for almost 40,000 acres of BLM Wilderness Study Areas in Colorado.

Similarly, Sen. Gardner has sat on the sidelines of our state's largest opportunity to protect our public lands. Colorado is driven by outdoor recreation, home to endless iconic landscapes, and with people who love these places. It is shocking that Sen. Gardner has thus far failed to support this opportunity to protect these landscapes for us and future generations.

I urge all Colorado Members of Congress to join Senator Bennet and Representative Neguse and vote in support of the CORE Act on October 31st. This bill is good for wildlife and for the people of Colorado.

Craig Grother

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