



## Coloradans Asked to Weigh In on Bureau of Land Management's Public Lands Rule

*Public lands supporters welcome new policies to strengthen stewardship for water,  
open space and recreation in era of climate change*

**March 30, 2023 (Grand Junction, CO)** – Coloradans welcomed today's [announcement](#) of a plan that shifts the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) focus to prioritize recreation, conservation, and protecting public lands and cultural resources. BLM plays a critical role in Colorado, managing [over 8.3 million acres of wildlands across the state](#), areas vitally important to conservation of water, wildlife, and the growing demand for access to the outdoors.

Known as the "Public Lands Rule," the Bureau's plan highlights the need for the agency to work with local communities to focus on the conservation of land, water, and wildlife to ensure future access to federal public lands while combating the growing impacts of climate change. It also encourages agency managers to work more closely with Tribal nations to ensure stronger cultural resource protection in Colorado and across the West.

*"The BLM's new Public Lands Rule has great promise to finally put conservation on equal ground with extractive uses on our shared public lands," said **Jim Ramey, Colorado State Director for The Wilderness Society**. "Today's announcement sets the stage for agency staff to work with local communities to protect the cultural and outdoor values we love in Colorado while addressing the challenges our state is facing from population growth and climate impacts."*

*"When used wisely, the Bureau of Land Management conservation mechanisms will support our local economies, tourism, and outdoor recreation as well as provide certainty for our rural and gateway communities so we can make long-term investments, said **Chaffee County Commissioner Keith Baker**. "We look forward to this rule-making process and modernizing management policies to allow for increased recreational opportunities and access to nature."*

*"Next 100 Colorado supports the proposed Bureau of Land Management rulemaking--a critical step the agency must take to prioritize balanced management practices in a just and inclusive way," said **Alma 'Rosie' Sanchez Co-chair, Next 100 Colorado**. "For too long, the BLM has focused on extractive industries that negatively impact communities of color and disadvantaged communities. It is time that antiquated BLM land management policies are modernized to develop an inclusive conservation approach that prioritizes the health and wellbeing of communities and considers the values of communities who have been historically excluded. We hope this rulemaking will provide communities with the necessary tools to safeguard sensitive cultural resources, provide improved access to recreational opportunities, connect people to healthier landscapes, and protect communities of color."*

*"Many of the remaining unprotected wildlands that define the West Slope are managed by the BLM," said **Scott Braden, Director of the Colorado Wildlands Project**. "Coloradans have worked tirelessly to protect places like the Dolores River Canyon Country, the Greater Dinosaur, Vermillion Basin and the Upper Colorado River corridor but haven't always had a national partner to help make these protections happen. Now we do and we look forward to working with the BLM to see these new policies and practices used to help protect the wildlands that support our communities, wildlife, and rivers to be resilient in the face of increasing recreational popularity and climate change for generations to come."*

Lawmakers, [businesses](#), and Coloradans across the state want to see more administrative protections by the BLM. Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper, along with other western Senators, sent the Biden administration [a letter](#) encouraging them to do more to protect more lands managed by the BLM;

and similarly, Representative Diana DeGette recently organized and sent [a letter signed by 40 members](#) of the House, including Representatives Joe Neguse, Jason Crow, Yadira Caraveo, and Brittney Peterson, calling on Secretary of Interior Deb Haaland to direct the BLM to help western states meet the challenges of the climate crisis by administratively protecting more public land.

*"A strong Rule can benefit wildlife in Colorado, by prioritizing protection of areas of public lands that wildlife call home," said **Megan Mueller, Conservation Biologist with Rocky Mountain Wild**. "For example, the Rule could help protect the most important habitat for Gunnison sage-grouse, a bird that is at risk of extinction and found only in Colorado and Utah. Gunnison sage-grouse are a favorite among birders who love to watch spring courtship rituals where males dance their hearts out to impress females. Elk, deer, songbirds, and many other wildlife species depend on the same habitat. This Rule could help protect this crucial wildlife habitat by designating Areas of Critical Environmental Concern."*

In addition to Western Congressional leaders, and [businesses](#), local elected officials who live in communities that depend upon BLM lands have also [called for greater protections](#). In May of 2022, 57 Colorado elected officials joined more than 70 of their western peers on [a letter](#) calling for greater BLM conservation, and Eagle and Pitkin counties joined the cities of Aspen and Glenwood Springs on [a letter](#) to the BLM state director calling for more conservation on BLM lands around their communities. Organizations also recently [urged](#) the BLM to manage these lands to maintain, improve, conserve, and restore degraded fish and wildlife habitat to increase habitat connectivity.

*"[Over 120 local elected officials from western states](#) have called on the Biden administration to protect more Bureau of Land Management lands as part of the administration's America the Beautiful initiative," said **Anna Peterson, Executive Director of The Mountain Pact**. "We look forward to the BLM using this rulemaking process to conserve and protect our nation's important public lands, [wildlife](#) and waters in tandem with locally-led efforts to advance conservation across the west."*

*"Here in Western Colorado, we've got multiple, major BLM planning efforts underway, covering millions of acres of public lands in multiple Field Offices," said **Peter Hart, Wilderness Workshop Legal Director**. "Today's announcement means that conservation is on a level playing field with other uses on BLM lands - something Wilderness Workshop and local communities have long been calling for. I'm encouraged by the BLM's announcement and hope the agency seizes the opportunity to begin implementing this rule quickly on the ground."*

**Kevin Timm, Co-Founder and Co-owner Seek Outside**, a Grand Junction-based manufacturer of high performance lightweight tents, backpacks and wood stoves, said, "As an outdoor business owner in Colorado, protected public lands play a critical role in my business and way of life. Protecting more of these BLM lands can help support local economies, local tourism industries and even local manufacturing like our Grand Junction-based outdoor brand while preserving our outstanding opportunities for recreation, including camping, hiking, paddling, hunting and fishing. I strongly encourage the Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management to do all that they can to better conserve and protect our nation's important public lands and waters. By doing so, they will provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, equitable access to nature, and safeguard the climate which will ensure that these important public lands continue to offer the unique recreational opportunities that bring millions of Americans to the great outdoors."

The Bureau announced a 75-day public comment period. Public comments will be accepted via a Department of the Interior portal, with anticipated informational public meetings in the coming months.

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