

# OUTDOOR ALLIANCE

February 23, 2021

Rep. Raúl Grijalva  
Chair, House Natural Resources Committee  
1511 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee  
202 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

## **Re: Outdoor recreation community for PAW+**

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, we write to express our strong support for the Protecting America's Wilderness Act, the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act, and the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act. We are pleased that these bills will again be on the House floor and look forward to a strong bipartisan vote in their support.

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

The bills included in the PAW+ package reflect years of engagement and negotiation by outdoor recreationists and conservationists, local communities, and other stakeholders. Additional detail on the outdoor recreation community's engagement and support for underlying bills follow.



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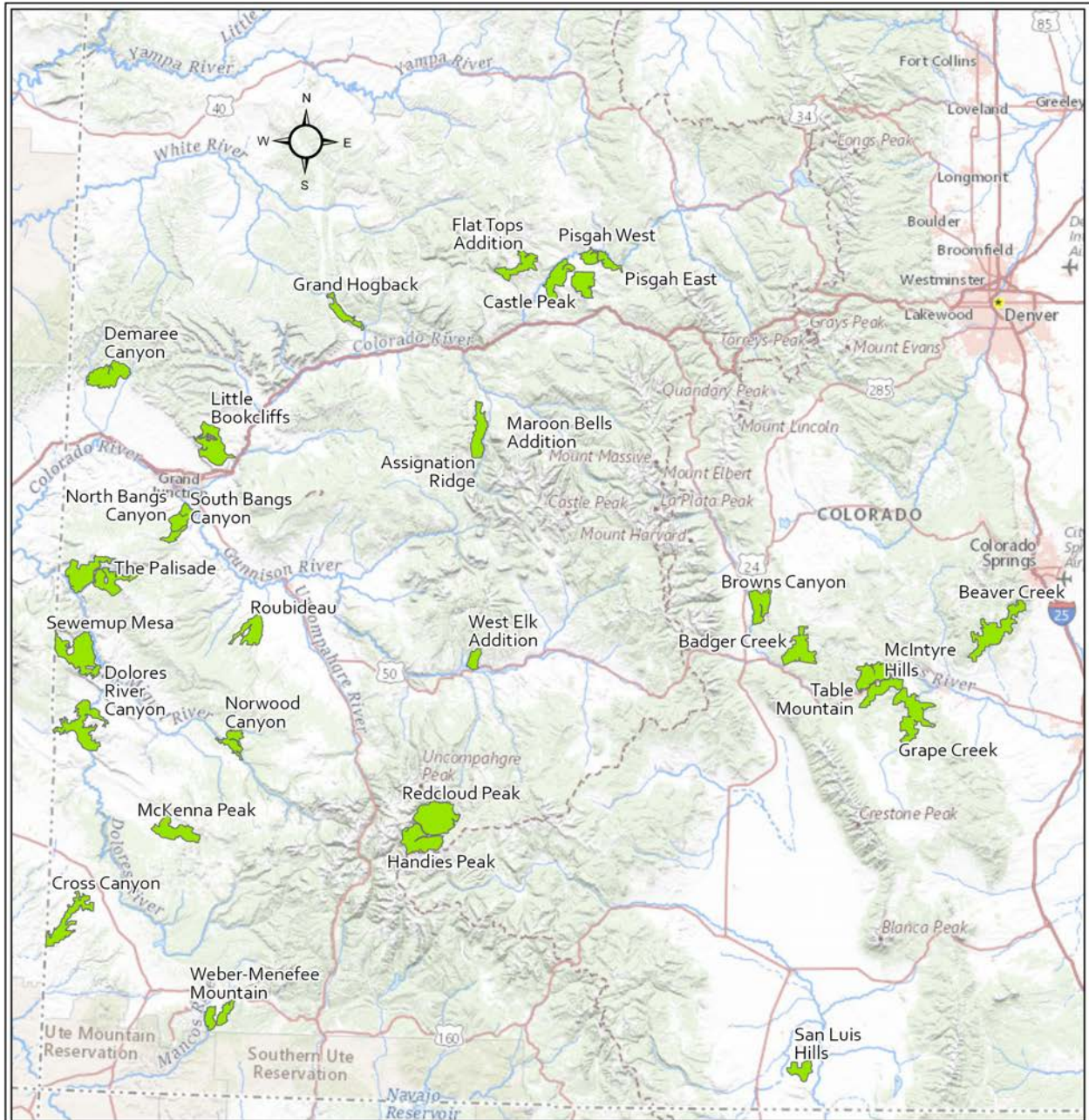
## Colorado Wilderness Act

The Colorado Wilderness Act protects important landscapes in Colorado for their conservation and recreation values. The bill protects Handies Peak and Redcloud Peak, two 14ers with spectacular view of the San Juan Mountains. The Norwood Canyon area benefits paddling opportunities on the San Miguel River and protects the area's unique geology, and the bill also provides important protections for paddling on the Dolores River. The bill supports conservation values and many forms of human powered outdoor recreation to the benefit of the environment and Colorado's quality of life and outdoor recreation economy, which supports 229,000 direct jobs, \$28 billion in annual consumer spending, and \$2 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Importantly, Outdoor Alliance supports this bill in part because of specific efforts Rep. DeGette has made to ensure that protection of conservation and recreation values move forward in harmony. Because some forms of sustainable outdoor recreation are not compatible with a Wilderness designation, it is essential that Wilderness bills move forward with careful regard for important existing and prospective recreational values. We greatly appreciate the careful efforts that have been made to ensure the bill does not close or impair access for valued areas. We strongly support and appreciate, as well, the inclusion of language to ensure that fixed anchors for climbing are managed appropriately within Wilderness areas.

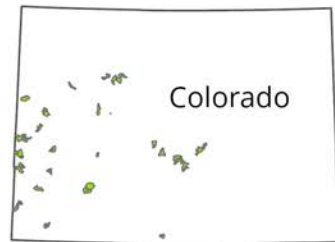


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Colorado Wilderness Act - Overview Map

■ Proposed Wilderness Area



0 20 Miles

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## Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

California's Los Padres National Forest is a popular destination for outdoor recreationists of all forms, from horseback riders, to mountain bikers, to wildlife viewers. Adding lasting protections to these areas will help sustain the health of the environment and the outdoor recreation economy. In California, outdoor recreation generates \$92 billion in consumer spending and supports 691,000 jobs, \$30.4 billion in wages and salaries, and \$6.2 billion in state and local tax revenue. The Central Coast Heritage Protection Act is an investment in the area's economic future.

The bill would protect more than 262,000 acres of public land within the Los Padres Forest and Carrizo Plain National Monument, designate 159 miles of river as Wild and Scenic, and create two new scenic areas, Black Mountain and Condor Ridge. Santa Barbara County's Condor Ridge is within the Santa Ynez Mountains, and its unique climate creates an area of high biodiversity and critical habitat for southern steelhead.

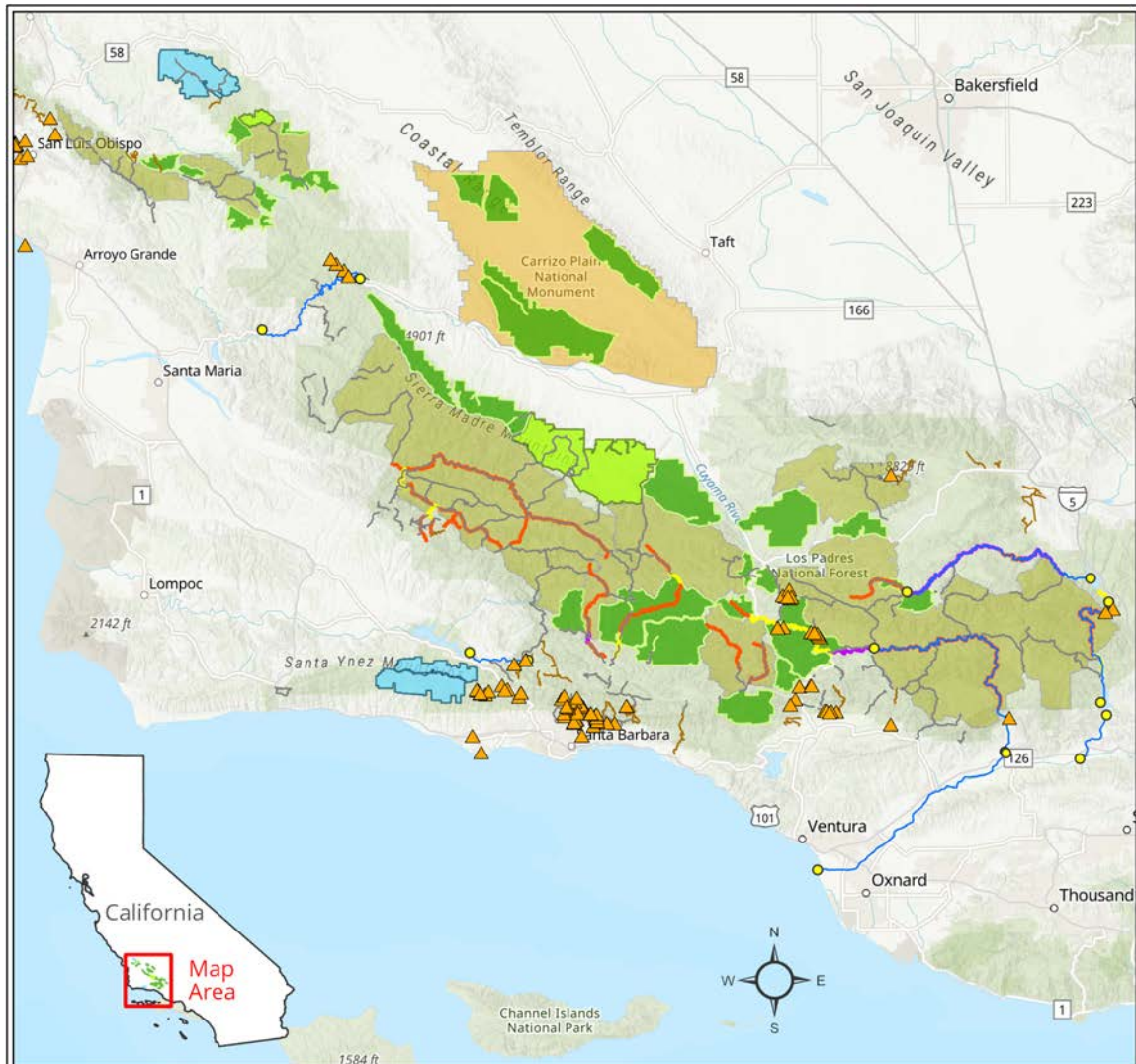
In addition to safeguarding clean air and water for Californians, the bill would create and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation. The bill designates a 400-mile-long Condor National Recreation Trail, supporting through-hiking and backpacking opportunities across the entire length of the Los Padres National Forest, from Los Angeles to Monterey County. The bill would also protect important and threatened wilderness characteristics around popular rock climbing areas in the Sespe Gorge along Highway 33. Paddlers supports adding more protected miles to the Wild & Scenic Piru Creek, a waterway rare for the region that provides outstanding whitewater less than an hour drive from downtown Los Angeles.

Importantly, all proposed new Wilderness boundaries were drawn in order to preserve existing mountain biking trails, and the bill would mandate that the Forest Service conduct future studies for improving mountain biking trail opportunities across the Los Padres National Forest. We greatly appreciate that the bill protects trail corridors for numerous high priority trails identified by local mountain bikers through the Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers (CCOMB), an IMBA local group, and CCOMB and IMBA have worked as part of a coalition to adjust proposed boundaries in order to protect corridors for the Mono Alamar trail, the McPherson



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Peak Trail, and the Rinconada Creek/Mine trails, as well as make other priority trail adjustments.



## Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

### Proposed Designations

- Proposed Scenic Area
- Potential Wilderness Area
- Proposed Wilderness Area

### Designated Areas

- Wilderness Area
- National Monument

### Proposed Wild & Scenic River

- Recreational
- Scenic
- Wild

### Recreation

- ▲ Rock Climbing
- River Access
- Whitewater Paddling
- Mountain Biking Trail
- Hiking Trail

0 10 Miles

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## Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act

The Northwest California Wilderness, Recreation, and Working Forests Act was crafted after years of input from business leaders, conservationists, anglers, mountain bikers, fire management professionals, and more and reflects the needs of a broad array of regional stakeholders. Through this broad collaboration, the bill benefits the region's public lands, local communities, and the millions of visitors who come to experience northwest California's storied outdoor recreation. This bill secures a vision of well-balanced, landscape-scale conservation, promotes restoration of degraded watersheds, and improves fire management.

This bill will conserve approximately 262,000 acres of public land as Wilderness, designate 379 miles of new Wild and Scenic rivers, and create a special restoration area of more than 700,000 acres. From the fog-shrouded redwood forests of Humboldt County to the sunny oak woodlands and grasslands of Mendocino, and the soaring peaks of the Trinity Alps Wilderness to the turquoise waters of the Wild and Scenic Smith River, this region is home to spectacular landscapes and world-renowned recreational opportunities.

In addition to protecting conservation values in the area, the bill will expand opportunities for sustainable recreation. With the establishment of the Elk Camp Ridge Recreation Trail, the bill will benefit northwest California by expanding mountain biking trails along the Elk Camp Ridge and in Del Norte County. It will permanently protect the South Fork Trinity River—a popular and valuable steelhead fishery—and study the feasibility of establishing the Bigfoot National Recreation Trail to highlight the botanical and biological diversity of the region. We greatly appreciate the bill's attention to ensuring the protection and sound management of Wilderness climbing opportunities, as well as the inclusion of Land of the Lost—the closest sport climbing to Arcata and Eureka—in a special management area.

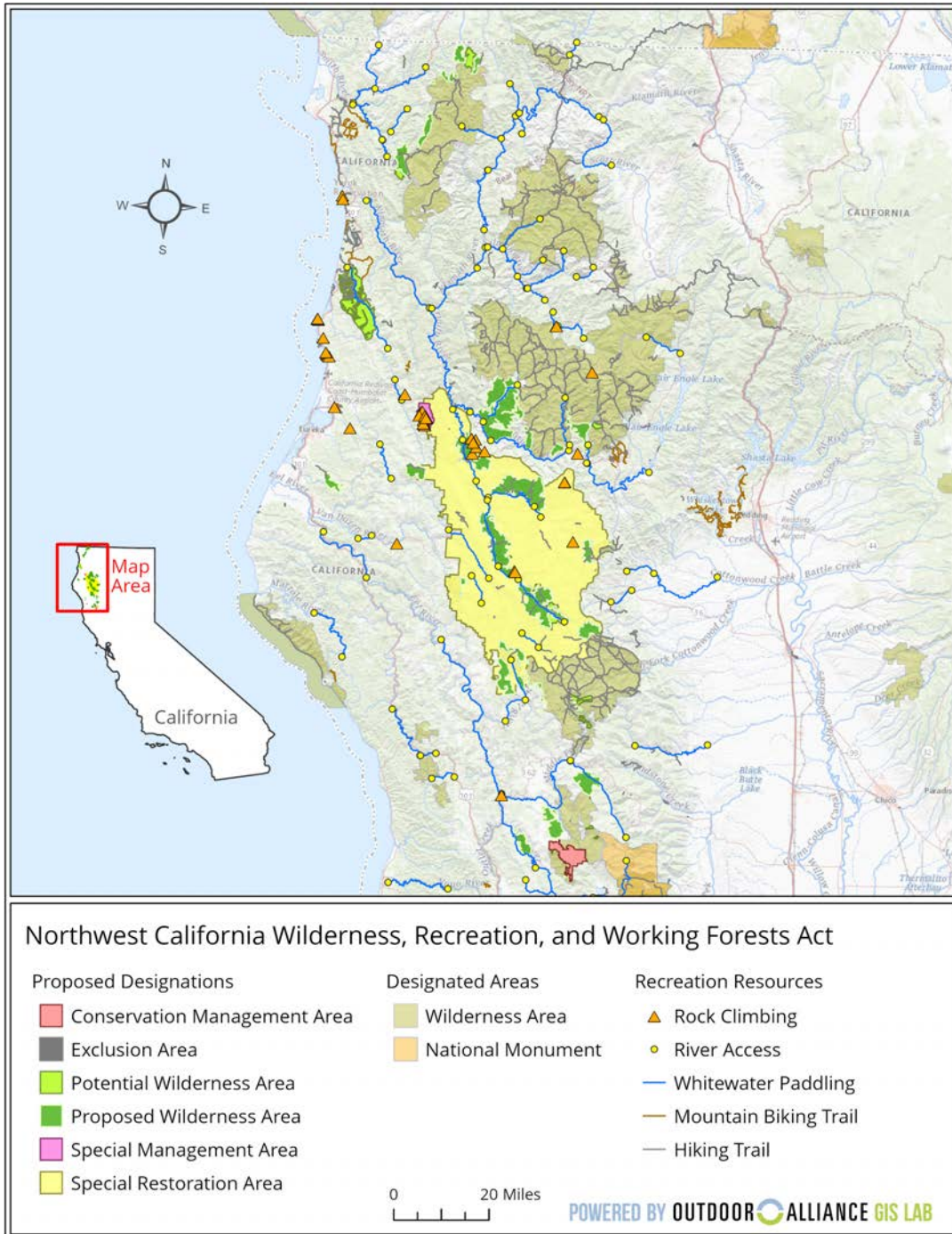
In addition to the bill's new Wild & Scenic designations for whitewater resources on the East Fork North Fork Trinity and Canyon Creek, paddlers enthusiastically support the protection of more than 48,000 acres of public land within the proposed Wilderness areas surrounding already-designated Wild & Scenic watersheds on the Trinity, Eel, and Black Butte Rivers. Moreover, 25 whitewater river access points will be protected within proposed Wilderness and special





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restoration areas, and potential Wilderness areas will ensure boaters can continue to paddle along the banks of the lower portion of Redwood Creek surrounded by the tallest living trees in the world.



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## San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act

Right on the edge of Los Angeles in the Angeles National Forest, the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument represents 70 percent of the open space in the Los Angeles metropolitan region and provides 30 percent of the region's drinking water. Adding lasting protections to the San Gabriel Mountains is important for the health and well-being of all Angelenos and can help sustain the health of local businesses and the broader outdoor recreation economy.

We especially appreciate the various designations included in the bill that allow for multiple recreational uses. The San Gabriel foothills represent an important urban/wild buffer zone and are the gateway to the mountains for many millions of Angelenos who otherwise have limited access to open space and outdoor recreation. The establishment of a 51,000-acre National Recreation Area along the foothills and San Gabriel River corridor and Puente Hills will not only help improve that access, but will also ensure that these highly-popular and heavily-impacted areas receive the resources they need to be managed and maintained in a sustainable manner for the safety and enjoyment of all.

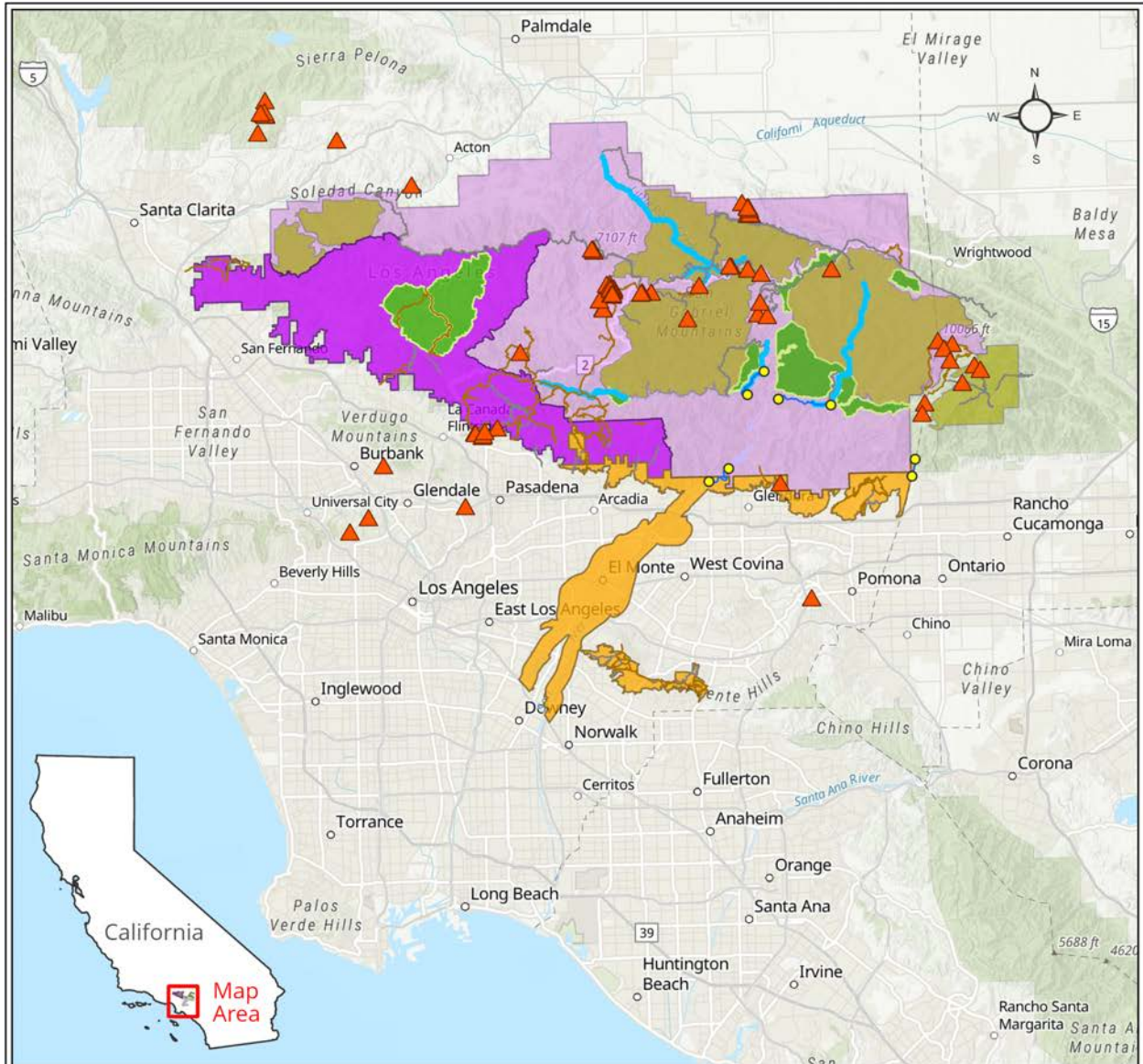
The bill would increase opportunities for Angelenos to enjoy the outdoors by expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by nearly 110,000 acres to include the western portions of the Angeles National Forest. The bill would establish an 8,417-acre Condor Peak Wilderness and a 6,774 acre Yerba Buena Wilderness. Additionally, the San Gabriel Wilderness would be expanded by 2,000 acres, and the Sheep Mountain by nearly 14,000 acres. The proposed Sheep Mountain Wilderness additions include a segment of the famous Pacific Crest Trail and the popular East Fork Trail. This area is famous for its rare mountain yellow-legged frog, the California spotted owl, and the many incredible trout streams perfect for fishing.

We remain interested in pursuing slight boundary adjustments to facilitate mountain bike opportunities within the bill area, but believe it is appropriate for the House to again pass this bill at this time.






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## San Gabriel Mountains, Foothills, and Rivers Protection Act

### Proposed Designations

-  Proposed Wild & Scenic River
-  National Monument Expansion
-  National Recreation Area
-  Proposed Wilderness

### Designated Areas

-  National Monument
-  Wilderness Area

### Recreation Resources

-  Rock Climbing
-  River Access
-  Whitewater Paddling
-  Mountain Biking Trail
-  Hiking Trail



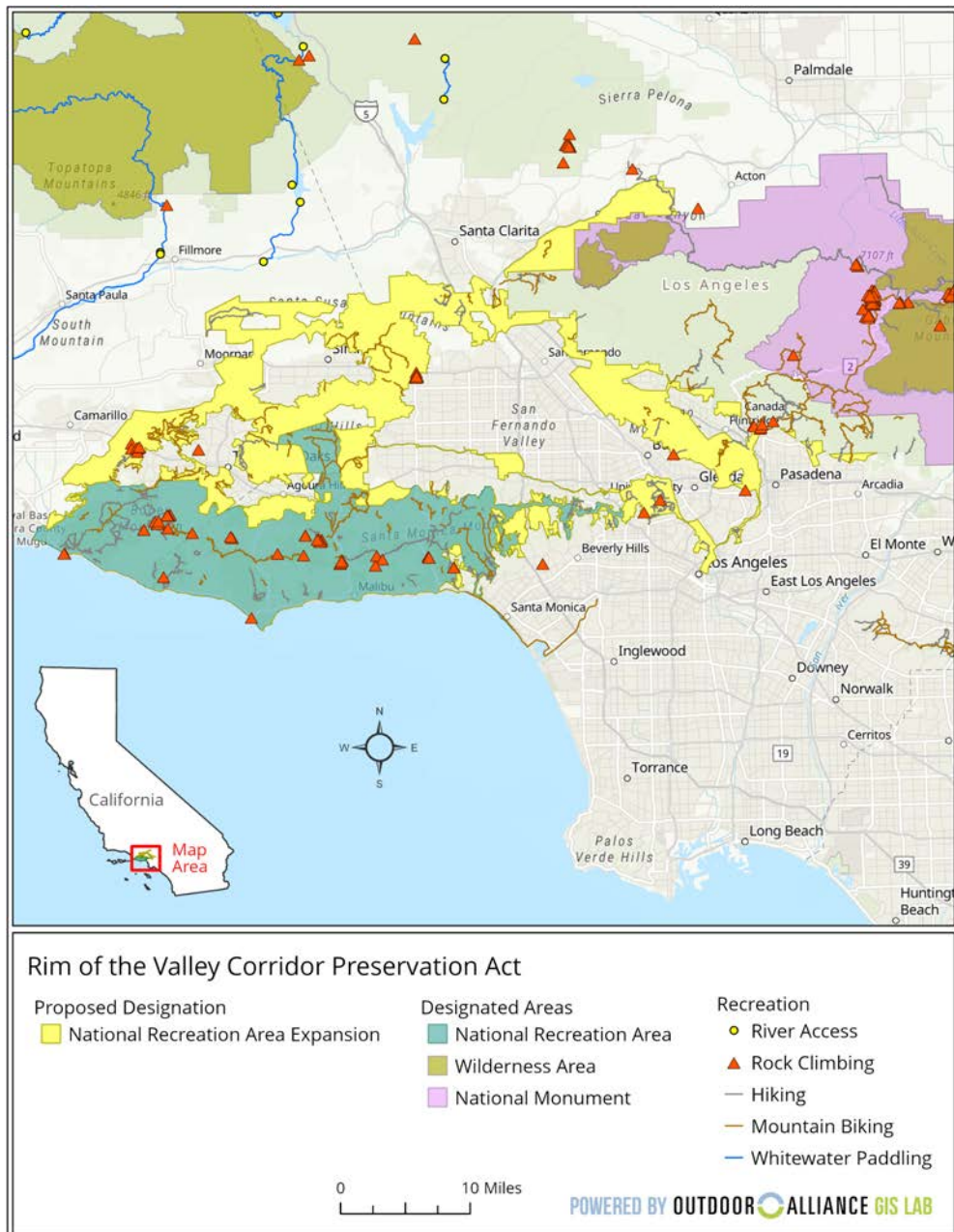
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## Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act

The Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act will expand the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and facilitate more equitable access to outdoor recreation opportunities. The bill will support recreation and conservation planning as well as needed capital improvements.



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## **Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act**

The Wild Olympics legislation will protect 126,500 acres of Wilderness and 464 river miles as Wild and Scenic on the Olympic Peninsula and preserve salmon streams and wild lands adjacent to Olympic National Park. In addition to protecting conservation values, the bill protects hundreds of miles of trails, scores of climbing sites, dozens of whitewater paddling destinations, and valued backcountry ski terrain.

The Olympic Peninsula, with Olympic National Park and the adjacent Forest Service lands and rivers, is an important part of the outdoor recreation landscape in Washington, and preserving these iconic lands and rivers will benefit the state's growing outdoor recreation economy. Outdoor recreation in Washington generates \$26.2 billion in annual consumer spending and supports 201,600 direct jobs.

While most of the prime Olympic Peninsula mountaineering destinations are within the Olympic National Park, several summits and crags of interest lay outside of existing Park and Wilderness boundaries on the Olympic National Forest. The Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act promises to provide lasting protection to places valued by climbers, locally and around the world. Proposed additions to the Mount Skokomish Wilderness, for example, will protect scrambling and climbing objectives such as Mount Washington, Mount Pershing, Jefferson Peak, Mount Ellinor, and the nearby Ellinor Towers. In the spring, Mount Ellinor is known as a destination for backcountry skiers.

For whitewater paddlers, the region is unique because the watersheds that radiate out from the Olympic Mountains receive several feet of precipitation each year, providing an incredible number of river miles in a small geographic area. Dozens of whitewater runs pass through towering ancient forests and moss-covered gorges. The rivers also serve as a conveyor belt for sand that forms the beaches and surf breaks on the wild Washington Coast.

Because of the collaborative approach employed in the bill's development, embracing input from local and national mountain biking stakeholders among others, the legislation enjoys broad support from the mountain biking community.



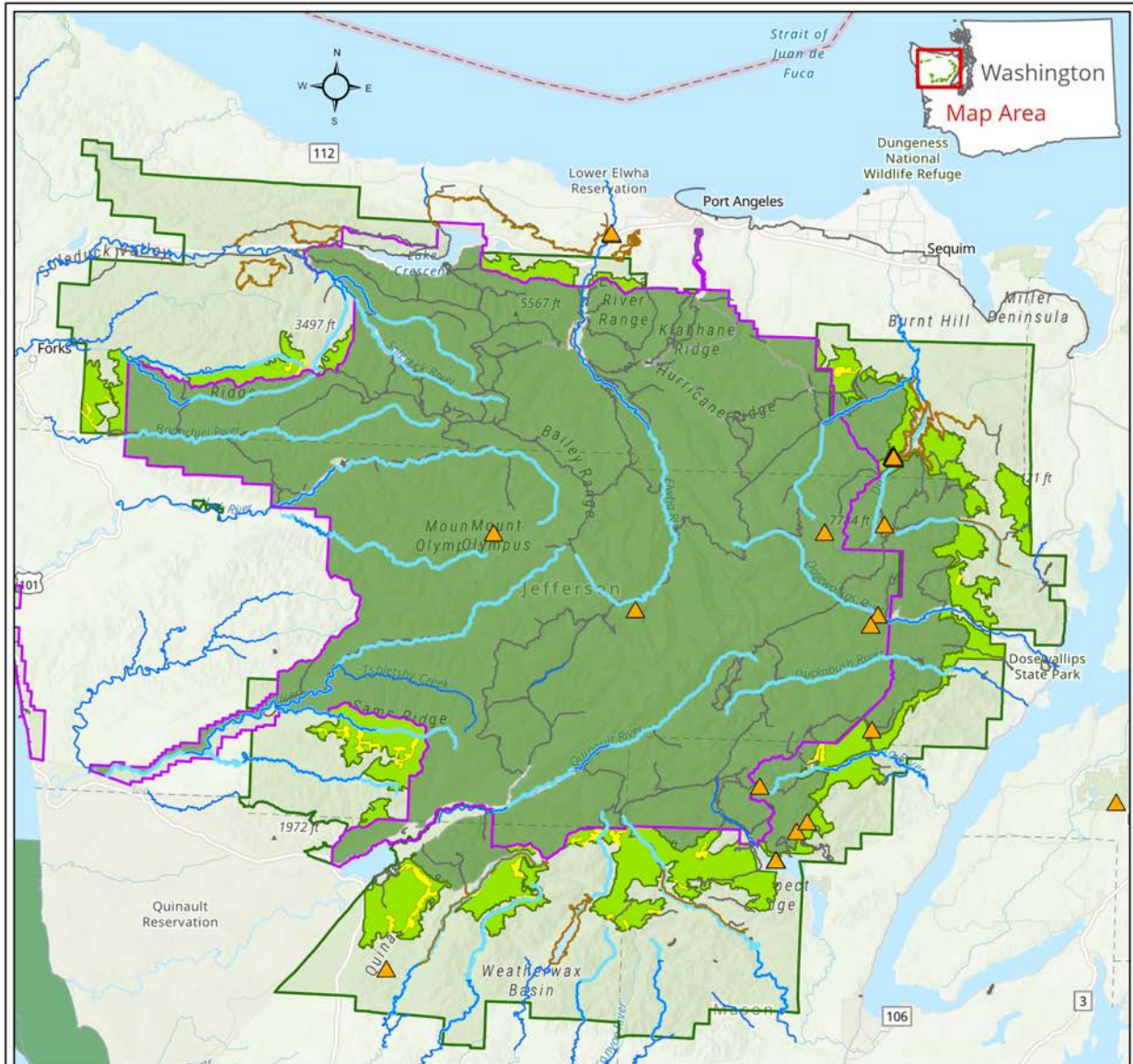


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We are particularly pleased to support legislation that designates Wilderness while also using other protective designations where appropriate. The mountain biking loop trail along the Dungeness River passes through ancient forests and along the banks of a wild river. By including the trail within the Wild and Scenic river corridor but outside of proposed Wilderness, a designation is applied that will protect and enhance the mountain biking experience alongside conservation values.



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## Wild Olympics Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

### Proposed Designations

- Proposed Wild and Scenic River
- Potential Wilderness Area
- Proposed Wilderness Area

### Designated Areas

- Wilderness Area
- Olympic National Park
- Olympic National Forest

### Recreation Resources

- ▲ Rock Climbing
- Mountain Biking
- Hiking
- Whitewater Paddling

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## Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act

Outdoor Alliance strongly supports the thoughtful protections embodied in the CORE Act. In addition to its essential protections for conservation values, the bill also protects hundreds of miles of trails, scores of climbing sites, more than 20 miles of whitewater paddling, and valued backcountry ski terrain.

In the San Juans, the Sheep Mountain Special Management Area protects backcountry ski terrain near Lizard Head Pass and creates management for the Ophir Valley area for new mountain biking trails near the town of Ophir. The Liberty Bell and Whitehouse Wilderness additions protect world-class hiking and climbing opportunities in the iconic Mount Sneffels range while allowing for a trail corridor for the iconic Liberty Bell/Hardrock 100 trail. The Tenmile Wilderness and Recreation Management Areas provide opportunities for long ridgeline technical traverses, challenging backcountry ski terrain, and world class mountain biking, and the Spraddle Creek Wilderness addition provides a primitive backcountry area in close proximity to downtown Vail while keeping the future mountain bike extension of the North Vail Trail viable. These designations allow for a new Wilderness-urban interface which provides a unique opportunity to experience and protect these important landscapes.

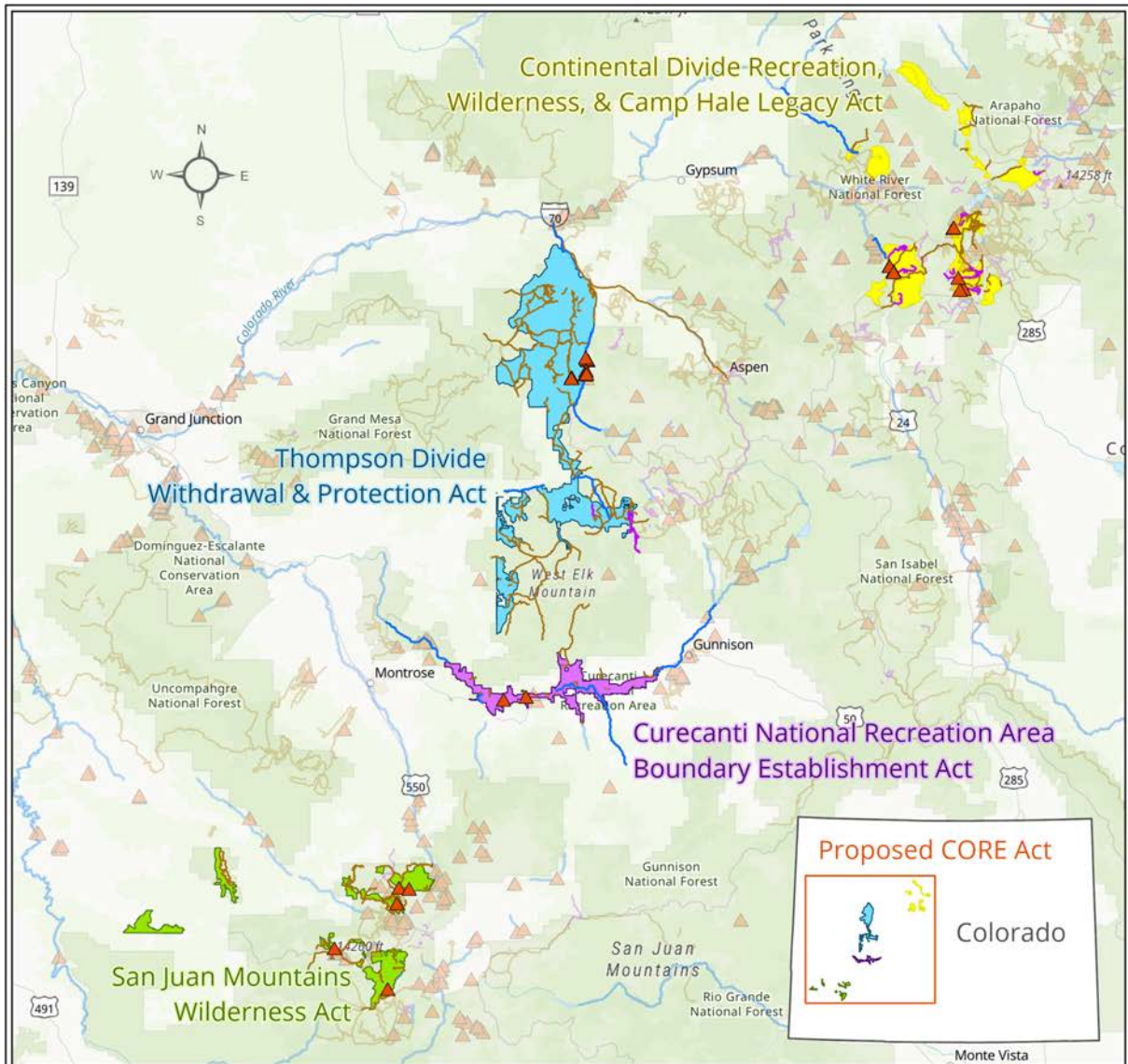
All of the proposed designations in the CORE Act have been carefully vetted by recreation groups, and designations protect and enhance recreational opportunities like hiking, climbing, skiing, and mountain biking. The mineral withdrawals and resource protections in this bill further preserve the scenic and natural qualities of these landscapes.

We are particularly pleased to support legislation that designates Wilderness while also using other protective designations where more appropriate. This approach is essential, in particular, for protecting and enhancing mountain biking opportunities. Because of the collaborative approach employed in the bill's development, embracing input from local and national mountain biking stakeholders among others, the legislation enjoys broad support from the mountain biking community. This approach—embracing alternative designations where appropriate to protect both existing and prospective mountain biking opportunities—should be considered a model for other protective designation efforts around the country.





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## Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act

- Continental Divide Recreation, Wilderness, and Camp Hale Legacy Act
- Curecanti National Recreation Area Boundary Establishment Act
- San Juan Mountains Wilderness Act
- Thompson Divide Withdrawal and Protection Act

- ▲ Recreation
- ▲ Rock Climbing
- Whitewater Paddling River
- Backcountry Ski Trail
- Trail



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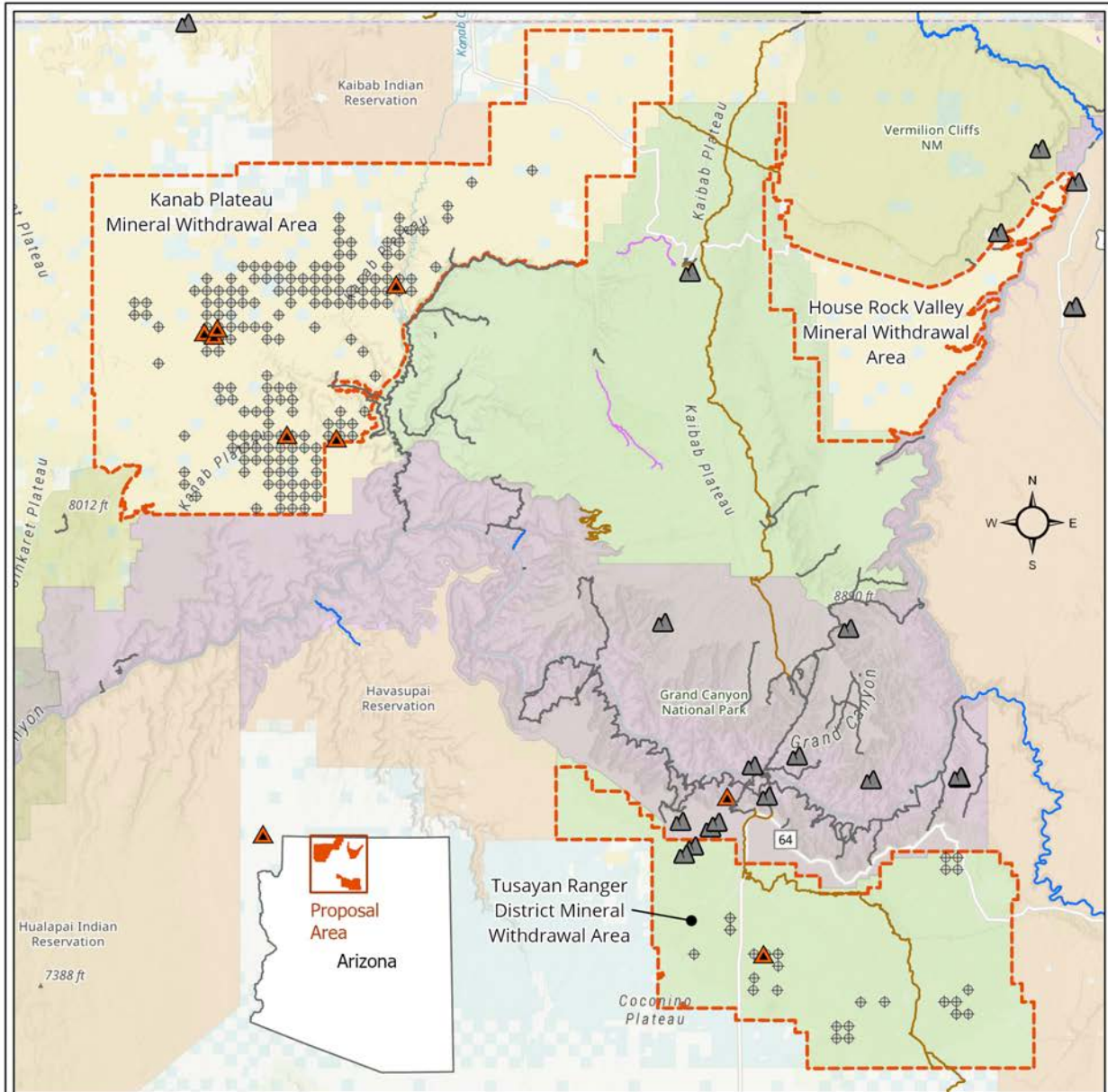
## Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act

The Grand Canyon of the Colorado and its surrounding landscape is an American icon. The area contains innumerable attributes and features of geologic, historic, scientific, and ecological value. It also supports a wide diversity of recreational pursuits that allow visitors to experience this one-of-a-kind landscape, and the importance and prominence of this area is difficult to overstate. Our community strongly supports measures intended to protect the Grand Canyon, its surrounding environment, and visitors through the mineral withdrawal prescribed in the Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act. Among other benefits, these withdrawals will help to protect water quality and the visitor experience, as well as directly protect trails and climbing areas within the withdrawal area.

Our community was actively engaged in supporting a 20-year administrative mineral withdrawal for lands covered by the bill, and the Department of the Interior announced that withdrawal in 2012, protecting roughly one million acres of public land surrounding Grand Canyon National Park from any mining activity. The future status of that withdrawal has come under threat, however, and Congress should make these protections permanent.



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## Grand Canyon Centennial Protection Act

- |                                  |                               |                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Proposed Mineral Withdrawal Area | <b>Recreation</b>             | <b>Energy</b>       |
| <b>Land Management</b>           | Rock Climbing Site            | Uranium Mine        |
| Native American Reservation      | Whitewater Paddling           | Active Mining Claim |
| Bureau of Land Management        | Hiking Trail                  |                     |
| Forest Service                   | Hiking, Mountain Biking Trail |                     |
| National Park Service            | Motorized Trail               |                     |
| State                            |                               |                     |
- 0 10 Miles



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The outdoor recreation community is enthusiastic in its support of the bills comprised by the PAW+ package. We look forward to the bills' passage and the opportunity to see through their effective implementation.

Best regards,



Louis Geltman  
Policy Director  
Outdoor Alliance

cc: Adam Cramer, Executive Director, Outdoor Alliance  
Chris Winter, Executive Director, Access Fund  
Beth Spilman, Executive Director, American Canoe Association  
Mark Singleton, Executive Director, American Whitewater  
Kent McNeill, CEO, International Mountain Bicycling Association  
Todd Walton, Executive Director, Winter Wildlands Alliance  
Tom Vogl, Chief Executive Officer, The Mountaineers  
Mitsu Iwasaki, Chief Executive Officer, American Alpine Club  
Sarah Bradham, Interim Executive Director, the Mazamas  
Keegan Young, Executive Director, Colorado Mountain Club  
Chad Nelson, Chief Executive Officer, Surfrider Foundation

