



Keep it wild...

COLORADO WILD!

Spring '99 Update

A Message from the President...

Sitting through two full days of meetings at the Vail Cascade Club in March gave me time to reflect on the remarkable path Colorado Wild (CWI) has blazed. Working at the National Wildlife Federation last October, a co-worker passed on an "exclusive" invitation to embark on collaborative efforts with the ski industry. Thinking it to be a bad case of green-washing, I signed up, fully planning to publicize the rejection forthcoming given the industry's knowledge of my work opposing both Breckenridge's and Vail's now infamous Category III ski area expansions. Rather, and to my surprise, the conference was an honest endeavor to pull issue opponents together to fashion solutions up front. While we wisely stated we will only participate if we see greater gains possible than through more traditional means (i.e. litigation), the conference allowed us significant access to targeted decision makers, including key Forest Service & EPA officials whose attention we rarely get for more than an hour.

But Colorado Wild's leadership at the conference implied something much greater. Up and running only since last fall, our clout has grown to a point of real stature and ability to effect change for the protection of wildlife habitat. *Colorado Wild quickly has become a significant force in representing widespread environmental and community preservation concerns throughout the Southern Rocky Mountains.*

Having worked with numerous organizations, I have seen social change groups come and go. I have watched some groups waste supporters' donations, and I have witnessed others flounder. I have also seen organizations undertake efforts well and succeed. But never before have I seen

such a tremendous response - let alone to a new organization - as to Colorado Wild. Since our launch late last year, we can already boast of almost 200 supporters, three (part-time) staff, 20 truly active volunteers, one main and four field offices, almost \$50,000 in income, and a growing list of on the ground accomplishments. More importantly, Colorado Wild brings together some of the best and brightest environmental activists Colorado offers, all in an organization working to fill a badly needed niche.

Despite the incredible challenges that Colorado's Wilds face, we have reason to hope. And that reason is the dedicated, tireless efforts of every one of our volunteers and staff coupled with your support. Colorado Wild's work is only beginning. This summer will see the launch of numerous, strategically adept campaigns. To fully achieve these forest preservation efforts, we have ambitiously drafted a 1999 budget of \$140,000, coupled with a diverse fundraising plan that includes special events, foundation support, and numerous other avenues. ***But in order to genuinely achieve our goals, we also need your continued support.*** So when that infrequent appeal arrives at your door, please consider digging deep for Colorado's Wilds. We will push every penny to the hilt for protection of the lynx, wolverine, goshawk, boreal toad, mustard fen, native cutthroat trout, and other species needing undisturbed wildlands to survive and flourish!

For Colorado's Wilds,

Jeffrey A. Berman
President, Colorado Wild

Forest Watch Campaign (FWC)

Working to Halt Logging Operations That Invade Roadless Areas, Sensitive Wildlife Habitat, or Old Growth Forests

Since 1997, the Forest Service has made plans to dramatically increase logging in Colorado's wild roadless areas.

The U.S. Forest Service (FS) since 1997 has made plans to dramatically increase logging in Colorado's wild roadless areas despite their roadless area roadbuilding moratorium. Major logging operations such as Sheep Flats on the Grand Mesa, South Fork north of Steamboat Springs, and Bushy Creek near Yampa would irrevocably damage roadless, pristine areas. Moreover, recently revised Forest plans (i.e. 15 year "zoning" for the forest), such as that for the Routt National Forest (NF), have proposed logging in a large number of roadless areas, making it inevitable that additional roadless area timber sales will soon be proposed.



To counter this threat, the FWC committee, submits "comments" through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that requires the FS to disclose all environmental impacts in a formal environmental analysis. Where they

underestimate or ignore altogether threats to wildlife and its habitat, the FWC appeals logging approvals, and where needed, will force the FS to heed wildlife and environmental protection laws through the courts.

Colorado Wild (CWI) Leading Opposition to the Proposed Sheep Flats Timber Sale near Collbran - One of the Largest in Colorado

On the **Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison NF** (GMUG NF) last fall, the

FWC successfully appealed the massive Sheep Flats timber sale, as it would enter several roadless areas. The FS released an additional study under NEPA this winter; FWC timber monitor Mike McGowan went straight to work on it, determining where the FS refused to fully address important environmental issues. Thanks in great part to Colorado Wilds' (CWI's) efforts, these sales have been halted for now with the FS's moratorium on new road construction in roadless areas. Also on the GMUG, CWI is examining possible lawsuits over the Ouray Springs/Darling and Spruce Mountain Sales on the Uncompahgre Plateau, and also on the Killdeer and Stage Stop Sales near Gunnison.

CWI's appeal of the Tie Camp timber sale, which would invade one of the few roadless areas left on the **Medicine Bow NF**, resulted in the sale being remanded for additional analysis on the effects it might have on habitat for lynx, a species that will soon be listed as threatened or endangered. Monitor Megan Corrigan is reviewing the just-released supplemental analysis, while she continues to track another roadless area invader, the Cold Springs timber sale.

On the **Rio Grande NF**, the FWC wrote comments opposing the FS's attempt to amend the Forest Plan to increase the suitable timber base by 30,000 acres. The analysis was based on faulty, or at least contradictory, data, and appeared to be proposed merely to permit two inappropriate timber sales. Mike M. & FWC Chairman Rocky Smith also continue to press the FS to drop plans to log the Trout Mountain area, which contains one of the finest stands of old growth on this Forest.

FWC Committee

Rocky Smith
(Chair - Denver)

Megan Corrigan
(San Luis)

Mike McGowan
(San Luis)

Lisa Philipps
(Salida)

John Whitney
(Durango)

... See FWC, Page 5

Ski Area Citizen's Coalition (SACC)

Working to Halt Environmentally Damaging Ski Area Expansions and Those Driven by the Lure of Real Estate Profits

Breckenridge Expansion Driven by the Lure of Real Estate Development Profits

Breckenridge ski resort has been pressing for an expansion that itself has minor (but not insignificant) environmental impacts. Yet Breckenridge's owner - Vail Resorts Inc. (VRI) - has steadfastly refused to divulge its development plans for nearly 300 acres of adjacent private land that would impact Cucumber Gulch - one of the highest quality wetlands complexes in Colorado. An at risk home of the state endangered boreal toad, the EPA even declared these wetlands an "Aquatic Resource of National Import".

By commenting on, appealing, and making clear our preparation of litigation on the Forest Service's (FS's) approval of this expansion, CWI played a significant role in delaying it for up to two years. Our concurrent lauding of EPA regional staff reinforced them in taking a bold stance against environmentally detrimental ski expansions. In particular, they compelled the Army Corp of Engineers (who has wetland destruction permitting responsibility) to look to real estate, not recreation, as the underlying purpose and need for this expansion, in turn forcing VRI to publicly disclose their development plans. Armed with this information, CWI sent a letter to the FS requesting they prepare a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). CWI will continue working to make sure that the Breckenridge community gets to decide what they want to be in the future, rather than having VRI-designed "neighborhoods" rammed down their throats. Meanwhile, public outreach efforts - through ongoing media and an April 16 town of Breckenridge debut of SACC's slide show on the environmental and social impacts of ski expansions - is encouraging additional

“To facilitate real estate development, Vail Resorts Development Corporation invests significant capital for on-mountain improvements, such as ski lifts, trails, and snowmaking... Following this strategy, VRDC invested significant capital to develop the Bachelor Gulch ski terrain, including a high-speed quad chairlift. This investment... allowed VRDC to contract to sell 101 ski-in / ski-out homesites adjacent to the Bachelor Gulch ski terrain for an average of \$750,000 per homesite.”

Vail Resort's 1997 Annual Report

opposition to the environmentally damaging aspects of this expansion.

Upcoming Keystone Expansion Proposal the Same Old Story

Meanwhile, Keystone ski resort (also owned by VRI) is planning a three lift expansion into Jones Gulch, likely a critical wildlife corridor. CWI's initial analysis seems to indicate that the sole motivation for this expansion is the lure of real estate developments. With several new volunteers, CWI has obtained extensive documentation through open records laws, determined potential allies, and begun building our knowledge base and local opposition to this expansion. And by making our concern and advocacy on this expansion clear to the FS, they recently switched gears and publicly stated they will examine accompanying real estate development that may impact the critical wildlife corridor (mainly to lynx and wolverine) as part of their analysis and permitting decision... a significant victory for the SACC committee!

...See SACC, Page 5

SACC Committee

Jonathan Staufer
(Chair - Vail)

Jeff Berman
(Boulder)

Alexandra Colon
(Boulder)

Mark Detsky
(Breckenridge)

Jennifer Kemp
(Boulder)

Kevin Knapmiller
(Frisco)

Sloan Shoemaker
(Aspen)

Committee for Responsible Recreation (R&R)

*Working to Reverse the Proliferation of Motorized "Trails"
Into the Backcountry*

Motorized Trail Proliferation: A Real Unchallenged Threat

The proliferation of user-created motorized trails holds a significant and growing threat to biodiversity in Colorado. Motorized trails in roadless areas and sensitive habitats are degrading public lands that would otherwise

be eligible for wilderness.

Motorized trail construction decisions have so far been dominated by off-road vehicle (ORV) user groups. Agencies have lacked funding and political support for sound planning and enforcement of even modest motorized trail

restrictions. The funding void has been filled by well-financed ORV groups using "partnerships" to pressure the agencies into building more motorized trails. Worse yet, much of the funding used by ORV groups to pressure the Forest Service (FS) & Bureau of Land Management (BLM) comes from the Colorado State Parks Division, which allocates close to a million dollars each year for motorized trail construction and maintenance on public lands with virtually no public accountability or environmental evaluation.

The R&R Is Hard At Work Addressing the Motorized Threat to Wildlife Habitat

To counter these threats to wildlife and its habitat, the R&R Committee has been busy with many activities as we head into Rocky

Mountain spring. In the North Park region, Roz McClellan organized input from local ranchers and conservationists against a proposed motorized trail system. In conjunction with Wyoming's Friends of the Bow, the R&R also commented on the illegally ORV created Middle Fork Road in the Medicine Bow / Routt NF.

Meanwhile, the R&R submitted extensive comments on a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Uncompahgre NF Travel plan revision. We formally objected to environmentally damaging trails; these will be affected by State Trails funding in the upcoming year. CWI will follow-up with FS appeals on all ORV applications that do not disclose environmental impacts as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and work to stop these motorized trails from being approved. Moreover, CWI will be working to reform the whole motorized trails approval process by either working with the FS or by challenging ill-advised backcountry road approvals through administrative or judicial means.

The R&R has also begun coordinating public pressure from statewide and local conservation organizations to bring about changes in the Colorado State Parks Motorized Trail Program. We will push for public review of motorized trail proposals, development of environmental standards for approval of motorized trail proposals, and a shift in motorized trails funding from new trail construction to environmental mitigation of current trails. Roz McClellan took the lead on this enormous but critical project; the R&R has begun making headway with the State Trails Commission in forcing them to adequately review ORV applications.



R&R Committee

Lisa Philipps
(Chair - Salida)

Ben Doon
(San Luis)

Marie Jordan
(San Luis)

Roz McClellan
(Nederland)

...SACC

Battling Ill-advised Ski Area Expansions, Yet Trying to Work with the Ski Industry

The SACC has cautiously stepped into collaborative processes with the FS, EPA, ski industry, and other environmental advocacy groups continent-wide. At the March "Sustainable Summits" conference in Vail, organized by a collaborative process building non-profit group, CWI President and SACC committee member Jeff Berman took the lead in representing widespread environmental and community preservation concerns. While expressing sentiment that CWI, through its SACC program, would only be willing to participate in further collaborative efforts if we see greater gains in environmental and community protection possible than through our traditional means (i.e. litigation), the conference allowed us significant access to targeted decision makers. We also utilized the opportunity to network with other environmental organization representatives continent-wide, and plan to use such contacts to build a national coalition. Along with Sierra Club Conservation Chair Bruce Hamilton, Jeff will participate in an environmental panel at the National Ski Area Association's annual conference May 24 in San Francisco, while Chairman Jonathan Staufer will head to Washington D.C. for a similar discussion in June moderated by U.S. Representative Mark Udall.

...FWC

The Routt NF is Aggressively Pursuing Roadless Area Logging to Remove "Blowdown" From a Huge October, 1997, Wind Storm

About 20 miles north of Steamboat Springs, the FWC has formally opposed the proposed South Fork timber sale, under which dynamite would be used to construct a road into the middle of a roadless area adjacent to the Mt.

Zirkel Wilderness. The revised **Routt NF** Plan ridiculously determined the area to be incapable of wilderness designation because it was not challenging enough to hikers! The final decision is expected very soon; CWI is planning to file an appeal and lawsuit if necessary to protect this area. The Routt NF's latest proposal involves invading a proposed scenic river corridor along the North Fork of the Elk River to remove more blowdown. A bridge would span the river using gravel from both sides to help build bridge supports, degrading the qualities that make the river corridor eligible for protective designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. And staying "busy", the Routt NF also proposed the Morrison Creek Timber Sale near Yampa, which would enter two roadless areas. The FWC distributed an action alert resulting in over 100 letters in opposition to this timber sale.

On the **San Juan NF**, monitor John Whitney is busy determining if CWI should sue over the FS's approval of the proposed Pagosa Huts and Trails system. This project would include road construction in a roadless area. Meanwhile, he continues to rally public support against the proposed Dudley Timber Sale, which could include cutting of mixed conifer old growth. He is investigating whether a lawsuit could be filed to stop this sale now that a limited version has received the green light.

On the **White River NF**, Rocky and Megan composed and distributed an alert for the proposed Piney River project north of Vail, which would allow cutting on 2200 acres over the next 7 years in an area already extensively logged. Jonathan Staufer - chair of the Ski Area Citizen's Coalition - helped distribute the alert, and a field trip with local residents and others is planned for this summer.



The recently revised Routt Forest Plan (i.e. "zoning" for sections of National Forest) ridiculously determined the area where the South Fork Timber Sale is proposed to be incapable of wilderness designation because it was not challenging enough to hikers!



Colorado Wild
P.O. Box 1525
Boulder, CO 80306
www.coloradowild.org



Colorado Wild works to protect, preserve, and restore the native plants & animals of the Southern Rocky Mountains, focusing its efforts on habitat protection of the forested high country.

Colorado Wild, Inc. is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) registered organization. Tax-deductible donations that make our work possible can be sent to the above address. Or for more information, call us at 303-546-9911.

What's Inside

President's Message	Page 1
Forest Watch Campaign Going to bat opposing roadless area timber sales in our National Forests	Page 2
Ski Area Citizen's Coalition Challenging ski area expansions driven by the lure of real estate development profits at Breckenridge & Keystone	Page 3
Committee for Responsible Recreation Hard at work halting the proliferation of motorized "trails"	Page 4

Colorado Wild's Board of Directors

Jeff Berman
President
(Boulder, CO)
Megan Corrigan
(San Luis, CO)
Mike McGowan
(San Luis, CO)
Marianne Moulton,
Treasurer
(Nederland, CO)
Mike Petersen,
Secretary
(Republic, WA)
John Whitney
(Durango, CO)

Colorado Wild extends a special thanks to:

Robert Alsobrook
Colin Baker
Woody Beardsley
Environmental Support Center
Dana Kelly
Mike Lewinski
New Land Foundation
John Powers
Andy Robinson
Hermann Staufer
Josef Staufer
John Watson
Greg Willson