



March 10, 2010

AmericanMotorcyclist.com

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
1440 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0307

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
123 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-4401

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on H.R. 4289, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009, introduced by Representative Diana DeGette.

The American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) and its sister organization the All-Terrain Vehicle Association (ATVA) opposes H.R. 4289 because it will designate more than 850,000 acres of public lands as Wilderness in Colorado without any input from local elected officials and affected user groups. By designating these public lands Wilderness, the legislation will close off responsible motorized access to hundreds of thousands of acres.

Founded in 1924, the AMA is the premier advocate of the motorcycling community, representing the interests of millions of on- and off-highway motorcyclists. Our mission is to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling.

Public lands are for the enjoyment of all Americans and not just an elite few who would have you build a fence around them for those who are physically able to enjoy them. Enthusiasts who enjoy our nation's public lands are not just the nimble and fit but also families with small children who wish to recreate together as well as active senior citizens and handicapped who enjoy the freedom to access the outdoors that off-highway vehicles and all-terrain vehicles provide.

The AMA opposes any process that does not allow full public debate on the disposition of public lands. Indeed, these designations deserve to be considered to allow time for thoughtful deliberation and input from affected user groups, local and state elected officials and Congress. However, the AMA, Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO), Trails Preservation Alliance (TPA) nor any of their individual members or member clubs were contacted or asked for input to avoid conflict with existing multiple use (including, but not limited to motorized) activities.

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Furthermore, in a letter addressed to the Subcommittee from COHVCO and TPA, it states "the maps posted on her (DeGette) website that show the individual areas proposed for Wilderness designation are so poor in quality and lacking in any geo-reference information that it has proven to be extremely difficult and time consuming to perform any analysis for any potential conflicts."

While the AMA supports the appropriate designation of Wilderness areas as they apply to the definition of the 1964 Wilderness Act, H.R. 4289 does not meet the definition of Wilderness. Indeed, the Wilderness Act defines Wilderness, with a capital 'W', as those areas which are essentially in a natural state, where changes are produced by the environment itself—not by the hand of man. Much of the land in question is criss-crossed by roads, trails, power lines, dams, bridges and structures. Surely this does not meet the definition of Wilderness.

It is also important to note that all of the affected lands in H.R. 4289 are not in DeGette's congressional district. To date, not one Colorado Representative has co-sponsored H.R. 4289. This is very telling—the local population in the area affected does not support this bill.

3.5 million acres are already designated as Wilderness in Colorado and by a stroke of a pen this single piece of legislation proposes to increase Wilderness by another 850,000 acres without local input of those who recreate on that land.

In fact, a compelling argument could be made that this type of broad legislation does more to protect public lands *from* future generations rather than *for* future generations.

It is my sincere hope that this Subcommittee continues to engage the public in their deliberations on the disposition of public lands. The AMA and its members stand ready to serve as a resource for you and your staff as you further consider responsible public access to America's public lands.

Again, I wish to thank the Chairman, the Ranking Member and the Subcommittee for holding this hearing on H.R. 4289.

Sincerely,



Edward Moreland
Vice President, Government Relations