2025 FALL NEWSLETTER

Colorado Wild Public Lands
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Hello CWPL Members, Colleagues, and Friends!

It is my distinct pleasure as President of the Board to announce Colorado Wild Public Lands' new Executive Director, Nicholas Green! Nicholas originally hails from Nashville, Tennessee, where he first grew his love for the outdoors and public lands in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, on family ski trips to Steamboat, and exploring the hills and rivers of Tennessee.

After receiving his Bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, Nicholas decided to pursue public lands full-time and moved to Colorado in 2019. He then received a Master of Science degree in Outdoor Recreation Economy from the University of Colorado Boulder, where he extensively studied public lands and natural resources management. Nicholas was a policy advisor for the Mike Johnston for Mayor Campaign in Denver, focusing his efforts in climate and transportation policy and helped lead a successful mayoral campaign. He also mastered the ins and outs of corporate sustainability during his time at VF Corporation.

Nicholas brings not only educational and professional backgrounds to bolster Colorado Wild Public Lands' impact, but also a fiery passion for public lands protection. His pursuits on the mountain and throughout Colorado's public lands fuel his tenacity for CWPL's mission and his willingness to devote himself to ensuring our public lands are protected and accessible for all.

Welcome, Nicholas!

Stephanie Davis, President

A Word from our new Executive Director

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude and excitement to serve as the executive director of Colorado Wild Public Lands. I feel so honored to be part of an organization that serves an often-forgotten aspect of public lands protection and stands up for the simple, yet fundamental principle that public lands should remain public, open, and accessible to everyone. Colorado Wild Public Lands' mission reflects what I have chosen to dedicate my career to and resonates deeply with me.

Just in the short time since starting this role, we have had a tumultuous atmosphere that has put public lands at the forefront of hyper-partisan politics. At Colorado Wild Public Lands, we continue to reject the notion that public lands should be inserted into partisanship. Public lands are a deep, core tenet of the American identity, regardless of political affiliation or beliefs, and any attempt to force them into one ideology or another only serves to weaken everyone's right to public lands.

There is no denying that public lands are in the political crosshairs. We have seen attempted mass selloffs of public lands, layoffs of federal land management agency employees, increased private control over public lands for corporate interests and extraction, attempts to remove public lands management rules like the Roadless Rule and Public Lands Rule to loosen regulations, and a government shutdown. Despite these attacks, the American people have demonstrated time and again their wholehearted support for public lands.

During the comment period for the Trump Administration's plan to rescind the Roadless Rule on US Forest Service land, 99% of the 625,737 comments received opposed the rescinding of the rule. After massive bipartisan pressure from voters, legislators, public lands organizations, hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts, Senator Mike Lee stripped his proposal for public lands selloffs from the One Big Beautiful Bill before its passing. And recent polling from Colorado College's 2025 Conservation in the West Poll demonstrated an all-time high support for public land conservation over energy development, regardless of political affiliation.

Public lands continue to be the one thing that binds Americans together, regardless of their beliefs or affiliations. And so, Colorado Wild Public Lands will continue to fight for those lands. In a time where divisiveness has taken over the dialogue, we will ensure that public lands are protected for all, enjoyed by all, and accessible to all.

Nicholas Green, Executive Director

Colorado Wild Public Lands in the News

Recently, SummitDaily published an article on a proposal for permitting along the Blue River, following the completion of the Blue Valley Ranch Land Exchange. The article highlighted significant pushback from the local community, especially amongst anglers and local shop owners, who called the permit system a "bait and switch." Our executive

director was interviewed for the story, highlighting Colorado Wild Public Lands' concerns throughout the land exchange process: "The permitting system is what we think would be a first step toward getting to full privatization of this stretch of the river."

Photograph of Blue River, SummitDaily

Colorado Wild Public Lands is still fighting the land exchange and proposed permitting, with an appeal currently submitted with the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). We are already engaging with local community members to fight a permit system and make sure public access to the Blue River is not hindered.

Read the article at https://www.summitdaily.com/news/colorado-gold-medal-fishing-land-swap-lower-blue-river-concerns/

Make sure to visit our website to get more updates on CWPL land exchange projects!

Colorado Non-Profits Unite!

In September, Nicholas Green and board member Anne Rickenbaugh attended the Southern Rockies Conservation Alliance (SRCA) fall retreat in Crested Butte. Joined by a multitude of public lands organizations throughout Colorado, Colorado Wild Public Lands participated in panels and meaningful discussions regarding updates to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) following the *Seven County Infrastructure Coalition v. Eagle County* (2025) decision, Roadless Rule rollbacks, and the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act.

The participating organizations left the retreat with a stronger knowledge of how to navigate a new legal landscape and how to build consensus around public lands protections. Colorado Wild Public Lands is proud to help build bonds with other public lands organizations so that we all can achieve our missions.

Wait, NEPA? What happened?

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of major federal actions. This process may involve preparing Environmental Assessments (EAs) or more detailed Environmental Impact Statements (EISs). NEPA also requires opportunities for public involvement, including public comment periods for EISs.

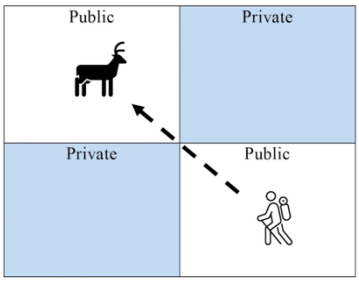
A recent Supreme Court decision (known as The *Seven County* Decision) has thrown NEPA into limbo, as the Supreme Court's 8-0 decision upends how NEPA has been interpreted for the past 50 years. The decision significantly curtails which aspects of a project federal agencies are required to analyze under NEPA, as well as strengthened judicial deference to agencies' decisions about the scope of environmental review. In other words, the Court's decision makes legal challenges to NEPA reviews more difficult by increasing deference to federal agencies. Agencies now have greater authority to determine the scope of environmental review, and courts are less likely to overturn those decisions.

While the decision certainly changes NEPA as we know it, there is uncertainty as to *how* NEPA changes going forward. Until cases make their way through the federal court system, there is no existing case law to understand just how NEPA will fully change.

So, what does this mean for CWPL and our work? We will continue to use our playbook and utilize NEPA to ensure that environmental reviews are done properly and legally. As the landscape of NEPA changes, CWPL will adapt to ensure our work within the court system is as impactful as possible.

Public Lands Wins!

Sure, times are a bit scary, but there is also some great news that has happened recently! In October, the Supreme Court declined to hear a case against the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that upheld the legality of corner crossing on public lands.



Since the Supreme Court declined to hear the case, corner crossing is now legal in Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Oklahoma, and Kansas, meaning that public land users can legally step from public land to public land at corners without trespassing. This is a BIG win for public access to parcels that were previously inaccessible.

There is also increasing momentum throughout Colorado to address river access in the state, and CWPL is looking to take advantage of this momentum to support improved access to our public lands and waters.

Check out these river access stories here:

https://coloradosun.com/2025/10/27/river-access-legislation-colorado/?fbclid=IwY2xjawNs4eBleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHuYhDQ9sG7uGbxqHTWCvE1AXsywutrD0ZYezHwfnS6fuKTTikmJkS4n2Wmsr_aem_LGJSqwdW1iBahHx1mNEjDg

https://www.postindependent.com/news/boaters-anglers-want-clarity-around-public-access-to-colorados-streams/

Updates on our Projects

Willow Creek Land Exchange near Winter Park: Following a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, Colorado Wild Public Lands received a massive document release and catalogued the information (including appraisals, emails, and supporting documents for environmental analyses) for our members to review on our website next week. We are still awaiting a decision on our complaint in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia regarding FOIA violations by the United States Forest Service for withholding appraisals and other documents.

Valle Seco Land Exchange near Pagosa Springs: Despite efforts to find common ground during mediation, opponents demonstrated an unwillingness to compromise with our organization. CWPL has since filed an appeal with the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in August 2025.

Locke Park Land Exchange near Hillside: We are awaiting the release of the Environmental Analysis and connected comment period following the released Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) from the US Forest Service in April 2025.

Buffalo Horn Land Exchange near Meeker: As of April 2025, CWPL is still awaiting a ruling on our appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) submitted in November 2023.

Rapid Creek Land Exchange in Pitkin County: After receiving an overview of the land exchange from Pitkin County Open Space in April 2025, we are awaiting the beginning of a NEPA scoping and comment period.

Stay Tuned for Future CWPL News and Events

There will be some exciting events and changes in the near future involving Colorado Wild Public Lands, so be on the lookout! While we are in the midst of a federal government shutdown, public lands issues are very much alive. CWPL will be hard at work to achieve our mission of protecting the integrity, size, and quality of our Colorado public lands.

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS!

We at Colorado Wild Public Lands sincerely thank each and every one of our members and supporters who have helped our organization impact and protect public lands in Colorado in 2025.

PARTNERS

Southwest Property Law - Maya Kane
Parsons Law Office - Jeff Parsons
Energy and Conservation Law - Travis Stills
JVAM Law - Benjamin Monarch and Ryan Jarvis
Hogan Lovells: Michael Theis and Liz Och
Denver Law - Neil Levine
40BWorks - Suzanne Jackson
Max Ink - Reina Katzenberger
High Country Conservation Advocates
San Juan Citizens Alliance
Wild Earth Guardians
Independence Pass Foundation
Crystal Valley Environmental Protection Association
Rocky Mountain Wild Women for Wildlands
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
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REI Coop

Thank you for supporting CWPL's work!

There is another way to help if you have a digital shopping card at Kroger Food Stores, which includes City Market, King Soopers, Smiths, and Ralphs.

It won't cost you a thing. Just log in to your account and hit the Community Rewards tab. Select Colorado Wild Public Lands or the code WH042, and Kroger will make donations to CWPL based on the amount you spend in the store.