Yo, silent majority — let’s start making some noise!

You may have noticed that the Hidden Gems proposal has run into a little, ahem, opposition. We anticipated some sort of a fight over the Gems, of course. There always is with wilderness. The protection that wilderness designation gives to the land comes with tradeoffs, and there will always be user groups that aren’t willing to compromise.

But the public dialog about the Hidden Gems proposal turned surprisingly nasty this fall. Though only a small minority, the opponents piled on and made a lot of noise. Misinformation spread faster than we could chase it down.

The brushfire of opposition has since died down somewhat, but the wake-up call still rings loud and clear. We’re on the front lines of a national battle over federal land conservation, and the fierceness of the attack is an indication of how high the stakes are for the Hidden Gems. The passive support of a silent majority is not going to cut it — we need to make more noise of our own.

What’s at stake

The opponents ask, Why do we need more wilderness? Good question. Let’s review.

We live in a landscape of national importance. Our region includes America’s most-visited national forest (the White River) and the headwaters of the Colorado River; it occupies a vital position in what conservation biologists call the “spine of the continent,” a key wildlife migration corridor; and it contains core habitat for imperiled animals, such as lynx, and the world’s largest elk herd.

Much of what makes our region so popular, and so ecologically significant, is its wild and scenic backcountry. Trouble is, most of it doesn’t have any

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6
What do wilderness advocates, ranchers, snowmobilers, climbers, hunters, cross-country skiers, water users and mountain bikers all have in common?

In the Carbondale area, these unlikely bedfellows have joined forces as the Thompson Divide Coalition to protect a 200,000-chunk of their backyard from the threat of natural gas development. The Wilderness Workshop is pleased to have convened this diverse group and remains a proud member of it.

The Thompson Divide landscape includes the Thompson Creek and Fourmile watersheds, Coal Basin, and the upper parts of the East Divide, Garfield and Muddy Creek basins. It contains two popular local ski areas (Ski Sunlight and the Spring Gulch cross-country trails) and much of the largest unprotected roadless expanse in Colorado. An important wildlife linkage between the Grand/Battlement Mesas and the Elk Mountains, it provides vital, mostly mid-elevation habitat for elk, bear, mountain lion, bighorn sheep, lynx, wild turkeys, boreal owls and cutthroat trout.

This area is very close to WW’s heart: most of it is proposed for wilderness designation by the Hidden Gems Campaign.

Coalition members’ opinions about the Hidden Gems proposal are as diverse as the groups they represent, so TDC is unlikely to weigh in on the wilderness debate. The group is focused on finding specific strategies for extinguishing the existing natural gas leases in the Thompson Divide area and withdrawing the area from availability for future leasing, rather than pursuing the more comprehensive protection of wilderness designation. But while WW and TDC may have different missions and visions, permanently saving this landscape from the drill rigs is something we can all agree on right now.

The threat is real. Roughly half of the Thompson Divide area has been leased for oil and gas development, with several different companies holding 81 leases. The recent construction of the Bull Mountain Pipeline – which we fought, unsuccessfully, last year – potentially sets the stage for development of some of these leases, should the price of gas rise high enough. Needless to say, drilling and all the associated roads and infrastructure would have devastating impacts on the wildlife, water quality, and ranching economy of the immediate area, not to mention off-site impacts such as truck traffic, pollution and socioeconomic problems in the nearby communities of Carbondale and Glenwood Springs.

At least three other Western communities have launched similar efforts in recent years. Citizens have successfully protected New Mexico’s Valle Vidal, Montana’s Rocky Mountain Front and the Wyoming Range by securing Congressional legislation to withdraw these areas from further leasing, and clearing the way to work toward retiring existing leases. TDC is considering these and other strategies.

One very powerful action that the Coalition has already launched is a comprehensive water monitoring study. Conducted by the Roaring Fork Conservancy, the project is testing ground and surface water in the Thompson and Fourmile watersheds for the presence of dozens of chemicals linked to natural gas drilling and production. The very existence of this baseline data puts any would-be drillers on notice that the community knows exactly how clean its water was beforehand, and will hold them accountable for any contamination.

Lisa Moreno, formerly WW’s Hidden Gems Campaign organizer for Pitkin County, took over as TDC campaign coordinator in August. As of this writing, TDC remained under WW’s fiscal umbrella but was in the process of transferring to another nonprofit fiscal sponsor to ensure greater independence.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We urge everyone who cares about the health of the Thompson Divide area to join TDC. It’s free – just sign up via the website, www.savethompsondivide.org, or call Judy Fox-Perry at 970-963-2464.
Media stories suggest that the Western Slope’s natural-gas boom has gone flat, but anyone who’s driven over McClure Pass to Paonia recently knows that the drill rigs haven’t gone away. And those are just the ones you can see from the road.

Despite the economic downturn, the long-term forecast calls for more drilling – lots more. Consider the following numbers:

- 24: oil and gas wells that were anticipated on the White River National Forest by the current (1993) Oil & Gas Leasing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- 82: wells on the WRNF today
- 900: additional wells the WRNF is contemplating in the next 15-20 years
- 1,200: wells anticipated on BLM lands by the Glenwood Springs Field Office, according to its current (1999) Oil & Gas Leasing EIS
- 2,192: wells on Glenwood Springs Field Office BLM lands today
- 5,678: additional wells the BLM anticipates during the 15-20 year lifespan of its new Resources Management Plan

We’ve been telling these agencies for years that they need to update their Oil & Gas Leasing EIS’s. These documents determine how much of our public lands will be open to energy development and how much development is likely to occur. Now that the number of wells greatly exceeds anticipated development on these lands, it’s clear that the agencies need to revise their outdated documents and reassess cumulative impacts.

In the past 18 months we’ve stepped up the pressure by filing a lawsuit over the proposed Hells Gulch project south of Silt (see p. 4). Thanks partly to this suit, the WRNF has finally announced that it will revise its Oil & Gas EIS, tacitly acknowledging that the document is no longer defensible. Scoping – the initial step of determining the range of issues to be considered in the impact statement – is expected to begin before yearend.

The BLM is currently revising its Resource Management Plan, which includes an updated Oil & Gas Leasing EIS; a draft is likely to be released next fall. We’re continuing to monitor its progress.

WW is the only entity capable of watchdogging these processes to ensure that they don’t merely pave the way for all-out drilling, and instead result in the strongest possible protections for the land. No other local organization has the expertise in this field; no state or national organization can devote the time to this specific issue.

Yet it is of paramount importance to the people and wildlife that reside in and around the 2.3-million-acre White River National Forest and the 567,000 acres managed by the local BLM. A future that includes more than 6,500 gas wells in the backcountry would be apocalyptic for the area’s recreation-based economy, its clean water and air and its quality of life.

The temporary lull in oil and gas development is coming to an end. The completion of a new pipeline has removed the bottleneck and increased the flow of natural gas out of the region, meaning that the impetus to drill in the Piceance Basin is now on par with other fields in across the nation. Policy makers increasingly view natural gas as either the bridge fuel to tide us over until a sustainable economy is tenable or an important long-term domestic source of energy. Either way, natural gas figures to play an important role in our energy economy for the foreseeable future. Since the Piceance is one of the most prolific tight-sands plays in the nation, we can’t expect this threat to disappear.

Natural gas development is the industrial equivalent of residential sprawl. It results in roading and denuding vast areas of both public and private land. It can result in huge amounts of air pollution and contamination of surface and groundwater. In short, it poses a substantial threat to the public lands we seek to protect and the environmental values we hold dear.

Dialing back the drilling

Inching closer: a drilling operation close to the East Willow roadless area, south of Silt.
Time running out for roadless areas

Federal protections for Colorado’s roadless areas are likely to be replaced by weaker state ones in the coming months – a potentially problematic setback for public lands throughout Colorado.

The state’s final recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on the Colorado Roadless Rule, which went out for public comment this fall, still have serious flaws. They allow for coal mining, logging and ski area expansions in roadless areas. And depending on how a Tenth Circuit court case turns out, they could end up grandfathering in nearly 100 dubious natural-gas leases, including more than 40 in the Thompson Creek, Clear Fork and East Willow areas.

These “gap” leases should never have been sold, or should have carried stipulations prohibiting road-building, because they were issued within roadless areas after the implementation of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Very little development has occurred on these leases, and the Forest Service is unlikely to allow any new drilling on them as long as their status is in question.

The resolution of their status hangs on the outcome of the Tenth Circuit case. While it’s impossible to make predictions, we expect and hope the court will validate, once and for all, the 2001 Roadless Rule. If that happens, the gap leases are likely to be challenged as illegal.

But if the court throws out the 2001 Rule, the fallback protection is the Colorado Roadless Rule, which is not looking strong. Despite persistent engagement from the Colorado conservation community (including WW and many of its members), the Colorado Department of Natural Resources hasn’t been willing to reconsider some of its recommendation to Gov. Bill Ritter. And unfortunately, implementation looks highly likely.

State conservation groups, including WW, continue to press the Department of Natural Resources to eliminate the loopholes in its roadless rule, but time is running out.

This means the Thompson Divide Coalition (see p. 2) may be our last hope. TDC is working to eliminate the local gap leases, along with many other non-gap leases, through a separate process.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Although the public comment period on the Colorado Roadless Rule has closed, letters to Gov. Bill Ritter and Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack are still helpful. Go to WW’s website, www.wildernessworkshop.org, and click on the Take Action section.

Full court press: WW party to four lawsuits

Lawsuits are a last resort: WW reluctantly sues, and only after exhausting all other administrative remedies. So the fact that we’re currently party to four different lawsuits against federal agencies – more than at any time in our 40-plus-year history – is an indication that the alert level on our public lands remains in the red zone.

All the suits stem from actions taken in the last two years of the Bush administration that threatened to undermine the biological integrity of our region’s public lands:

Oil shale. We’ve joined with numerous other state and national groups in filing two related suits against the Department of the Interior: one over the hasty Environmental Impact Statement that it relied upon to open up 2 million acres for oil shale and tar sands development, and the other over its approval of associated commercial leasing regulations.

Roan Plateau. As part of a coalition of sportsmen, recreation and conservation groups, we’ve also sued Interior over its plan to lease the Roan Plateau for natural gas development. In June, Bill Barrett Corp. bought the Roan leases from Vantage Energy and filed a motion to intervene. Barrett has subsequently stated that it may drill as many as 3,000 wells there – compared to the BLM’s original estimate of 200 – which certainly bolsters the contention of our suit that the BLM’s analysis of likely impacts is inadequate.

Hells Gulch project. This suit, which we and the Natural Resources Defense Council initiated more than a year ago, challenges the Forest Service and the BLM over their approval of an application to drill 45 wells south of Silt. We contend that the agencies failed to analyze the impacts of proposed wells on the downwind “Class I airsheds” of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass and Flat Tops wilderness areas, and so are violating state and federal air quality standards. The intent is to force the agencies to get a handle on the cumulative impacts of the gas boom.

Each of these suits has the potential to go to trial. Separate settlement negotiations are ongoing, and we and our fellow plaintiffs would consider settlements that address our procedural and ecological concerns.
Once again this winter the Wilderness Workshop is partnering with the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies and Dos Gringos Burritos in Carbondale to bring the acclaimed Naturalist Nights speaker series, featuring visiting and resident presenters. All shows are free. ACES shows are on Thursday nights and start at 7:30; Dos Gringos shows are on Wednesday nights and start at 7. Please join us!

**January**
6 (Carbondale) & 7 (Aspen) Bighorns of the Crystal River Valley – John Groves, Colorado Division of Wildlife
14 (Aspen) Tectonic Geomorphology of the Himalayas: Can Climate Play a Role in the Formation of Mountain Ranges? – Kayo Ogilby, Colorado Rocky Mountain School
20 (Carbondale) & 21 (Aspen) Owls of the Western Slope – Jason Beason, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory
28 (Aspen) The Complexities of Climate Change: Treetline Elevation Changes in the Canadian Rockies – Will Roush, University of Victoria Tree-Ring Laboratory

**February**
11 (Aspen) Turning Environmental Values Into Colorado’s Priorities: Politics and Environment in

**Colorado 2010** - Pete Maysmith, Colorado Conservation Voters
17 (Carbondale) & 18 (Aspen) God in the Wilderness – Rabbi Jamie Korngold, Adventure Rabbi/Synagogue without Walls
25 (Aspen) Dust on Snow, Early Snowmelt and the Colorado River - Jeff Deems, University of Colorado

**March**
3 (Carbondale) & 4 (Aspen) Confessions of an Off-Road Outlaw – Garrett VeneKlasen, travel/fishing guide
17 (Carbondale) & 18 (Aspen) Fens: Ancient Wetland Ecosystems – David Cooper, Colorado State University
25 (Aspen) How the West Was Warmed – Beth Conover, Greenprint Denver

Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES): 100 Puppy Smith St., Aspen.
Dos Gringos Burritos: 588 Highway 133, Carbondale. For more info, call WW at 963-3977.
Hidden Gems or bust

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

reliable protection from development. The parts that do — existing wilderness areas — lie mostly at the highest elevations, where rock and ice predominate.

The battle is over the biologically richer middle elevations. This is where the old-growth forests are, and where important species breed and spend most of their time. This vast zone also provides most of the invaluable “ecological services” that we humans take for granted, such as water filtration and air purification.

Wilderness designation has protected the “crown jewels” of our high country for a generation, to pretty much universal acclaim. The beauty of wilderness designation is its simplicity: it ensures that these areas will remain as they are, with nature’s forces in charge, forever. That assurance is a profound gift to us and to future generations.

Our wilderness areas are treasures that we hold in trust for a world in which wildness is in increasingly short supply. Now it’s our turn to extend the protection of wilderness to these “hidden gems” of the middle elevations — while it’s still possible.

Some of these lands are at immediate risk. In Pitkin and Gunnison counties, the threat is natural gas drilling.

Predominantly in Summit and Eagle counties, it’s industrial logging of the backcountry as a short-sighted response to the bark-beetle outbreak. Any number of other proposals to mine, dam, develop or commercialize our public lands are apt to surface as time goes on. (Ten years ago, no one imagined that Garfield County would become the epicenter of drilling in Colorado; similarly, we can’t predict what other threats will emerge in another decade.)

But the greatest threat of all, across the board, is the ever-growing pressure of recreation.

Whittling away at wildness

Central Colorado is a very attractive landscape for all sorts of recreational uses — hiking, hunting, biking, back-

HOW FAR CAN YOU GET FROM A ROAD?

In this map (which we fondly call the “bloodshot eyeball map”), the red lines are roads and the green blobs are areas that are more than one mile from a road. The farthest you can get from a road in our region is 6 miles, in the center of the Flat Tops Wilderness. Do we really need more roads?
country skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, climbing, camping, horseback riding and more. Each has its impacts.

The roads that we all use to access our public lands are the biggest wilderness-killers of all. Motorized routes inhibit wildlife migration, isolate breeding populations, constrain the movements of wide-ranging predators, introduce invasive species, and most significantly, disperse humans and their motorized disturbances into the backcountry: each point along a road is a potential gateway to further off-road adventures.

One of the paradoxes of human nature is that, while we love recreating in wild places, we always want to be able to penetrate further into them with our machines, which of course whittles away their wilderness. There are more than 1,800 miles of roads and motorized trails on the White River National Forest, a network that fragments the land into a thousand biological islands (see map opposite).

Fact is, Colorado has a lot more roads, and a lot less wilderness, than we’d like to think. The farthest you can get from a road in our region is 6 miles, in the middle of the Flat Tops Wilderness; in the entire state, it’s 8 miles (in the Weminuche Wilderness). Compare that with maximum core-to-perimeter distances of 26 miles in Wyoming (Teton Wilderness), 31 miles in California (Sequoia-King’s Canyon) and 65 miles in Idaho (Frank Church-River of No Return).

The purpose of the Hidden Gems proposal, in a nutshell, is to stop the fragmentation. Very few existing routes would be closed, but wilderness designation would stop future ones from being developed.

We started with the question, Why do we need more wilderness? Maybe the best answer is, Because we don’t need any more roads.

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Ode to a wilderness sign

Why do we need more wilderness? Here’s the answer I came up with as I was leading a group of hikers up the Placita Trail, through the proposed Crystal River addition near Redstone.

After ascending through oak and aspen forest for about a mile, we reached a Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness sign. I stopped the group and posed the question: What’s the difference between the land inside the wilderness area and the land on the other side of the sign?

It was a rhetorical question. My answer: Nothing…and everything.

Nothing, because as anyone can see, the forest is just as rich and riotous on both sides of the sign – by all appearances it’s wilderness all around. But that’s today. What about tomorrow, or next year, or when our grandchildren are grandparents? Wilderness designation assures us that the land on the uphill side of that sign will remain unchanged; the land on the downhill side could be logged, mined or motorized – or not – we just don’t know. That’s a fundamental difference, and it could mean everything.

Then I asked another question: What’s special about this land downhill of the sign, this area that we’ve dubbed a “hidden gem”? At the risk of sounding gimmicky, my answer was again: Nothing…and everything.

Nothing, because this acre of aspen forest is like hundreds of thousands of others in Colorado. It’s the kind of scenery that we so often charge through on our way to a Fourteener or a lakeside campsite, rarely taking time to observe it precisely because it’s such a common sight.

And yet what’s special about this particular patch of forest is everything. There are natural wonders everywhere we look, if we have but eyes to see. Before the hike, Karin Teague, a WW member who’s taken the time to really get to know this particular patch of land, urged me in an email to be on the lookout for small marvels: a unique stand of albino monkshood plants (“a freak of nature”), a favorite aspen grove, “superlative” white violets and red columbine.

And there’s another way in which this forest is special, and it’s this point that I think brings it all together.

No single acre of land is special by itself. Every acre is part of an ecosystem, and every ecosystem is connected to neighboring and overlapping ecosystems. These systems, and the animals, plants and even insects that comprise them, don’t confine themselves to human-drawn boundaries.

What we’re trying to do with the Hidden Gems wilderness proposal is not to protect specific amazing views or peaks or features, although there are some in the Gems. The point is to protect as much as possible of everything, because the value of it is in its wholeness, its integrity.

We wilderness advocates tend to use pretty pictures and superlatives to “sell” conservation, which is natural and necessary. But we have to remember that every wild place is special, regardless of its human aesthetic appeal.

— Dave Reed
The Hidden Gems proposal has long been just that—a proposal. Over the last few months, it’s changed significantly in response to input from adjacent landowners, local governments and other stakeholders. Even as the proposal approaches its final form, a number of other conflicts are still in the process of being resolved. This map highlights some key recent developments.

- The Colorado Army Air National Guard, which conducts helicopter training over several Hidden Gems areas, has expressed concern that some wilderness designations might inhibit some of its operations. National security being an overriding issue, we’re discussing with the Guard options that will simultaneously achieve enduring and essential landscape protections while sustaining HAATS’ valuable training operations.

- The Town of Gypsum asked that we adjust the Red Table boundary to allow continued motor access to two small reservoirs that supply the town’s water, and we have agreed.

- Pre-existing grazing rights are grandfathered in by any new wilderness legislation, but some ranchers are leery of the potential for additional bureaucracy. To address the concerns of the North Thompson Cattlemen’s Association, we will pursue other protective strategies for the Middle/North Thompson Creek area.

- In October the Crested Butte Town Council requested that Whetstone, a popular recreational area just outside of town, be added to the Hidden Gems proposal.

- In recognition of existing mountain biking, the 20,000-acre Sloan Peak area was removed from the proposal early on. We would like to partner with local mountain bikers to protect this important recreation area under a companion designation.

- Hearing concerns from the Norrie and Nast colonies (recreational cabins on leased Forest Service land), we removed the middle section of the Wildcat Mountain unit.

- We’re discussing with CDOT adjustments to Hidden Gems areas like Porcupine Gulch and Corral Creek to accommodate future maintenance and right-of-way needs.

- About 200 acres has been removed from the southern portion of Hoosier Ridge to accommodate a wildland-urban interface fuel reduction project that enhances community safety and protects water supplies.

- To accommodate the Summit Fat Tire Society, the campaign agreed to exclude several existing Summit County mountain-bike trails. This has resulted in boundary adjustments in the Williams Fork, Hoosier Ridge, and Parmalann A units.

- In October the Crested Butte Town Council requested that Whetstone, a popular recreational area just outside of town, be added to the Hidden Gems proposal.

- We’ve reached an agreement with Roaring Fork Valley climbers to carve popular sport-climbing faces out of the North Independent area and along the Crystal River Valley.

- In October the Crested Butte Town Council requested that Whetstone, a popular recreational area just outside of town, be added to the Hidden Gems proposal.
Resolution is possible

Which brings us back to the opposition. You probably won’t find too many people who think that we actually need to build more roads in our local backcountry right now. But what seems to unite the Hidden Gems opponents is the idea that we might need more roads – or mountain-bike trails or snowmobile play areas or backcountry ski huts – at some point in the future.

(It’s an interesting case of differing perspectives. Opponents argue that the population is growing, recreational technologies are advancing, demand for backcountry recreational opportunities is increasing – ergo, we’re going to need more roads, trails and other stuff. Wilderness advocates look at the same trends and come to nearly the opposite conclusion – the more pressure there is on the backcountry, the more important it is to keep more of it free from roads, trails and other stuff.)

Why is the Hidden Gems proposal provoking such a backlash, especially among recreationalists? A number of reasons.

For one thing, let’s face it, it’s a big proposal. Recent wilderness campaigns have typically taken on just one or two areas at a time, which means any opposition is apt to be strictly local. The Hidden Gems proposal consists of more than 40 units, stretching from south of the Gunnison River to north of I-70, and eastwards all the way to the Eisenhower Tunnel. The sheer scope of it is enough to attract larger and more powerful enemies.

The location of the Hidden Gems makes them all the more controversial. The first wave of wilderness areas protected high, remote terrain that didn’t have a lot of conflicting activities. This second harvest is at lower elevations and closer to communities, where the pressure is greatest to keep supplying recreational opportunities to meet the ever-increasing demand.

And the intensity of these uses has increased dramatically since the last time anyone proposed new wilderness in these parts.

Take snowmobiling. Ten or 15 years ago, snowmobilers stuck mostly to a few main trails, and the Hidden Gems proposal would have had little effect on them. Now, thanks to improved sled technology, they go virtually everywhere – up steep slopes, in untracked powder, through deep forest. Ironically, it’s been the snowmobilers themselves, in coming out against the Hidden Gems, who have called attention to this trend.

All of this has put the Hidden Gems proposal on the most-wanted list for state and national motorized groups. The Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition and the Blue Ribbon Coalition have thrown their support behind the local motorized clubs, framing the Hidden Gems as “anti-access” and contrary to the idea of “multiple use” of public lands.

Yet the Hidden Gems Campaign’s message is consistent: this is not about pitting one user group against another, it’s about what’s best for the land. It’s about finding the best protections for our remaining wildlands, watersheds and habitats.

And resolution is possible. Each time we’ve met with individuals with concerns – grazing, motor recreation, water providers, climbers, bicyclists – we’ve found solutions. Careful refinements of Hidden Gems boundaries and other adjustments have resolved 80-90 percent of the supposed conflicts.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can take any of the following actions by going to the Hidden Gems Campaign website, www.whiteriverwild.org, or by contacting Hidden Gems organizer Ginny Harrington at 963-3977, ginny@wildernessworkshop.org:

- Sign the open letter of support for the Hidden Gems.
- Write or call your county commissioners and your members of Congress, and consider copying your letter to the local papers.
- Attend meetings – be sure to get on the Hidden Gems email list to get alerts.
- Get involved in the campaign – volunteers are needed to gather signatures, organize events and help rally support.
We are the silent majority!

Contrary to what our more conspiracy-minded opponents seem to think, the Hidden Gems Campaign is not massively staffed or lavishly funded. If it were, it would have been able to respond more decisively to the attacks.

The campaign’s few staffers have spent most of the past two years on “stakeholder” issues – working to accommodate the concerns of specific user groups, government agencies, landowners, grazing permit holders, water rights owners, etc. It’s slow, technical, behind-the-scenes stuff that doesn’t make the papers.

But you know what? We’re doing exactly what we’re supposed to be doing. This is the way wilderness areas come into being. Given limited staffing, we can’t address every issue and concern at once, but this is a democratic process where everyone will have their say. Agencies may initially recommend wilderness, and in the end it takes an act of Congress to designate wilderness, but the heavy lifting is the in-between, and it’s up to private groups and their members to make it happen.

If we in the campaign have made a mistake, it’s in trying to do too much of the work with staff. What we’ve learned is that we can’t do it without you, our citizen supporters. So now we’re appealing to you for help.

Remember, we may be silent, but we’re the majority. Scientific polls have repeatedly shown that Coloradans and Western Slope residents overwhelmingly favor more wilderness. According to the White River National Forest, snowmobilers, dirtbikers, ATV riders and mountain bikers – the people most likely to oppose the Hidden Gems proposal – represent only a fifth of all forest users.

So don’t be intimidated by the naysayers. Instead, take action! See the sidebar on page 10 to learn how.

Hidden Gems thanks

We at the Wilderness Workshop would like to express our great appreciation to the individuals and foundations that have made lead gifts to support the Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign. They include, especially, Rob Pew and Susan Taylor, Kelly Wylly and Denis O’Donovan, David Bonderman and Laurie Michaels, the Campaign for America’s Wilderness and the New-Land Foundation.

For a full list of Hidden Gems funders in 2009, see page 14.

The Hidden Gems Campaign is still seeking funding for its work in 2010. If you’re interested in making a one-time gift to the campaign, please contact WW development director Dave Reed at (970) 963-3977 or dave@wilder nessworkshop.org.

WW supports DeGette bill

Rep. Diana DeGette is one of our heroes. Each Congress since 1999, she has introduced legislation to designate dozens of BLM parcels around the state as wilderness. DeGette’s persistence in championing her Colorado Wilderness Act has been not only politically courageous but also highly effective: having these areas included in introduced legislation has forced a higher level of scrutiny that we believe has kept many of these wonderful places from being developed.

Rep. DeGette now sits on the House Committee on Natural Resources, through which all wilderness legislation must pass. That’s no accident: she intends to move her bill. In October DeGette released a discussion draft of Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009. Working with Rep. John Salazar, whose 3rd Congressional District contains many of the lands in her bill, she’s reduced the proposal to just under 900,000 acres.

WW is completely in support of the DeGette bill. It overlaps with several of the areas also included in the Hidden Gems wilderness proposal:

- The West Elk and Powderhorn additions in Gunnison County.
- In the Roaring Fork watershed, the northern section of Assignation Ridge and the small Eagle Mountain unit in the Snowmass Creek Valley.

This overlap can only be a good thing: it’s all the same to us how these areas get protected as wilderness, and DeGette’s bill offers a parallel path to getting it done.

In addition, the Colorado Wilderness Act includes a few other areas in our region that we’d love to see designated as wilderness, such as Deep Creek (northwest of Dotsero) and the Grand Hogback (north of Rifle).

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please send Rep. DeGette an email or call her office to thank her and indicate your support for the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2009. You can learn more about the bill and send Rep. DeGette an email by going to her website, www.degette.house.gov. Her Colorado office phone number is (303) 844-4988.
Thanks to the many wilderness supporters who submitted entries in the Hidden Gems Photo Contest this summer. Thanks, also, to our judges, John Fielder, David Hiser and Alex Irvin.

The judges awarded first place to Michael Ogburn for his image of a fly fisherman on Petroleum Lake (in the proposed Ruby Lakes wilderness addition), and third place to Vayle Mango for her image of arctic gentians in the proposed Tenmile Wilderness. (Nick Logan won second place – see the cover.)

The People’s Choice Award went to Jonathan Christensen for his panorama of Lost Lake, in the proposed Red Table Wilderness.

The contest is not over! The deadline for submissions for fall/winter pictures is Feb. 15. For contest rules, see the Hidden Gems Campaign website, www.whiteriverwild.org.
The Wilderness Workshop wishes to thank the following generous people who have made donations since the previous newsletter. New members are indicated by an asterisk (*).

$10,000+
Anonymous (2)
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Robert and Marcie Musser
Oak Lodge Foundation
Pitkin County
The Thrift Shop of Aspen
Peter Van Domelen

Give to WW and get a free calendar!

We’re thrilled to be able to offer an extra reason to make a yearend donation to the Wilderness Workshop.

Give $100 or more by Dec. 31, and we’ll send you a free limited-edition Wild Men of Aspen 2010 calendar. This gorgeous calendar features photos of some of Aspen’s best-known athletes and outdoorsmen (that’s Aron Ralston on the cover), by some of Aspen’s best photographers.

Wild Men of Aspen has been produced and entirely funded by Kelly Wyly of the Elliott Yeary Gallery, with all proceeds going to WW. It will be sold at Explore Booksellers and other local outlets, but the best way to get your copy is directly from WW. Additional copies may be ordered for $30 each (price includes shipping).

We also have copies of Doug Scott’s book, Our Wilderness: America’s Common Ground, as an alternative premium for a $100+ gift.

Please indicate your preference on the remit envelope stapled into this newsletter.
### Donors

**CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE**

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<td>Robert Brinker and Pamela Joseph Bristlecone Mountain Sports</td>
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<td>$250-499</td>
<td>Colby June Fulton Reese Henry and Co. Felicity Huffman, in honor of Cory Brettman Dawn Barton Ginni Galicinao Frank Peters and Marjory Musgrave</td>
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<td>Karen Beard Carl and Katie Bergman Diana Beuttas HC and Dee Blakewell John Buerger Katherine and James Bulkley Katey Buser Beth Cashdan and Paul D’Amato Colorado Environmental Coalition Katalin Domoslay James and Carmen Dowley</td>
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**Hidden Gems donors**

The following are donations made to the Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign, for which WW is the fiscal agent.

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One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, “What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?”

– Rachel Carson
Upcoming events...

A Forever Wild Celebration – Dec. 6
(details at right)

An Evening with the Hidden Gems – Dec. 19
Toklat Art Gallery, Basalt

Naturalist Nights – starting Jan. 6
(details on p. 5)

Full Moon Cross-Country Ski Party – TBD
WW’s annual winter gathering

GET YOUR FREE WILD MEN OF ASPEN CALENDAR!
– See Page 13