

Colorado wilderness

The wilderness legislation signed by President Barack Obama March 30 includes at least seven provisions that affect Colorado:

- Rocky Mountain National Park: Designates nearly 250,000 acres of the park as wilderness but allows the National Park Service to battle a bark beetle infestation and fight fires.
- Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area: Designates approximately 210,000 acres of federal land on the Uncompahgre Plateau as a conservation area, including 65,000 as wilderness area.
- Arkansas Valley Conduit: Obligates the federal government to pay 65 percent of the cost of building the 130-mile water delivery system from Pueblo Dam to communities throughout the Arkansas River Valley.
- Jackson Gulch: Authorizes \$8.25 million to rehabilitate the Jackson Gulch irrigation canal, which delivers water from Jackson Gulch Dam to residents, farms and businesses in Montezuma County.
- Baca Wildlife Refuge: Amends the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Act to establish the purpose of the nearby Baca National Wildlife Refuge as "to restore, enhance, and maintain wetland, upland, riparian, and other habitats for native wildlife, plant, and fish species in the San Luis Valley." The law creating the park lacked a statement of purpose for the refuge.
- Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area: Designates a heritage area in Conejos, Costilla and Alamosa counties in the San Luis Valley. Authorizes up to \$10 million in matching funds to protect historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources.
- Colorado Northern Front Range Study: Directs the U.S. Forest Service to study ownership patterns in the lands in the Front Range mountain backdrop, identify areas that may be at risk of development and recommend ways to protect them.

— Associated Press

area.

"This place has taught me more than I can truly express," Udall said.

Roughly 1,000 acres will be added to the Indian Peaks Wilderness south of the park, keeping the land free of logging, mining and vehicles.

Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park becomes a wilderness

Rocky Mountain National Park and other Colorado sites protected

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ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK , CO COLORADO,

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, Colorado — Interior Secretary Ken Salazar joined Colorado lawmakers, business and conservation leaders Thursday to celebrate the designation of Rocky Mountain National Park's new wilderness area after 35 years of work.

The park and other Colorado sites were among more than 2 million acres in nine states set aside as protected wilderness in a bill signed March 30 by President Barack Obama.

Salazar told about 200 people that in other times of crisis, former presidents, including Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt, had worked to preserve the nation's heritage, including creating national parks and wildlife refuges.

"It's very appropriate, it seems to me, that at this point in our history we stand up and we say we will refuel our spirit, refuel our strengths by celebrating the landscapes of America," Salazar declared.

Salazar, a Democrat, was a Colorado senator when he and former Sen. Wayne Allard, a Republican, launched an effort in 2007 to designate about 250,000 acres — about 95 percent of the park — as wilderness. President Richard Nixon first suggested protecting the park in 1974.

Various disputes stalled making it wilderness, including the operation of a privately owned irrigation ditch that predates the park. Surrounding communities were concerned that a wilderness designation would block public access to parts of the park.

The wilderness area includes 14,259-foot Longs Peak and the remote Mummy Range.

Allard accompanied Salazar Thursday, as did Colorado U.S. Sens. Mark Udall and Michael Bennet and Rep. Betsy Markey.

Udall's grandfather Roe Emery was the first concessionaire in Rocky Mountain National Park and part owner of the historic Stanley Hotel in nearby Estes Park. Udall is an accomplished mountain climber and has skied the backcountry in the

Rocky Mountain National Park, about 70 miles northwest of Denver, is Colorado's No. 1 tourist attraction.

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