

## **New Poll Shows Coloradans Strongly Support Wilderness Protection** *Protecting Wilderness Seen as Important for Tourism, Wildlife and Recreation*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
May 30, 2007

**CONTACTS:**  
Ben Davis, (303) 522-6790  
Suzanne Jones, The Wilderness Society (303) 650-5818, x102  
Paul Gagner, Sierra Designs (303) 262-3065  
Ivan James, Avid sportsman (303) 526-0516  
Elise Jones, CO Environmental Coalition (303) 405-6704  
Sloan Shoemaker, Wilderness Workshop (970) 963-3977

**Denver, CO:** A May 2007 poll conducted by Talmey-Drake found that a solid majority of Colorado voters favor additional wilderness designation of federal public lands in Colorado. This support is shared widely among Coloradans across geographic, political party affiliation and gender categories, and is nearly identical whether respondents hunt, fish or recreate in other ways. The poll was commissioned by Colorado Environmental Coalition, The Wilderness Society and Wilderness Workshop.

“Coloradans from all walks of life and political persuasions overwhelmingly support more wilderness designation in our state,” said Suzanne Jones, Regional Director for the Central Rockies Office of The Wilderness Society. “Wilderness is indeed a non-partisan issue that unites Coloradans and reflects our state’s history of working together to protect our spectacular natural heritage.”

“Wilderness and our love of the outdoors is something that has always brought Coloradans together,” said U.S. Representative Diana DeGette (D-Denver). “This poll shows Coloradans overwhelmingly support protecting wildlands and preserving what is special about Colorado for future generations. I look forward to talking with all Coloradans to explore how to protect more of our threatened lands in Congress.”

The poll was conducted from May 1st to the 14th, 2007 by Talmey-Drake Research & Strategy, Inc., and is based on 617 random telephone interviews with Colorado residents. Results from the poll indicate:

- 71% agree wilderness-quality lands are more important for recreation, tourism, and wildlife than for energy development. Majority support was found across all geographical regions and party affiliations (85% Democrat support, 76% Independent support, and 52% Republican support).
- 90% agree that wilderness areas were important economically for the hunting, fishing, and tourism they support.
- 71% believe that wilderness areas should not be sacrificed for energy development, and that clean energy alternatives should be pursued instead. In a different question, only 33% of respondents agree that wilderness-quality lands are needed for domestic energy development.
- 70% of West Slope respondents favor designation of wilderness-quality lands in or near their county.
- 64% support protection of additional wilderness-quality Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, specifically supporting a proposal to protect one million eligible acres out of BLM’s eight million acres in Colorado.

“Wilderness-quality lands play an increasingly important role in our state and local economies. We are proud to provide the products that help enhance people’s experience in the backcountry,” said Paul Gagner, President, Sierra Designs. “We are not surprised by the overwhelming support for more wilderness designation in Colorado—our scenic wildlands are what draw people to our state and enhance the quality-of-life of our residents.”

The poll also found strong support for wilderness protection of the eligible wildlife-rich canyon country managed by the BLM. About one-sixth of BLM’s lands in Colorado meet the criteria for wilderness designation.

“BLM lands are underrepresented in the Colorado wilderness system. These lands are often lower elevation and provide important winter range for big-game species,” said Ivan James, an avid Colorado bowhunter. “Beyond the important wildlife habitat wilderness provides, many like me truly value the quiet recreation opportunities in designated wilderness.”

Additionally, the survey revealed that Coloradans also believe that wilderness-quality lands should not be sacrificed in the name of energy development. Colorado is currently in the middle of an energy boom and will see twice as many wells in four years as there are today at the current rate of development.

“Devastating our last remaining wild places is a bitter and needless sacrifice when Colorado is already on its way to becoming a leader in clean energy technology,” said Elise Jones, Executive Director of the Colorado Environmental Coalition.

Added Sloan Shoemaker, Executive Director with the Wilderness Workshop in Carbondale, “Coloradans agree that we need to look towards sustainable, clean energy alternatives before we irreversibly harm our last remaining wildlands. This sentiment is reflected in the strong support by West Slope residents for protecting more wild places near their communities.”

###

*For a copy of a summary of the poll results or the poll questions, please contact:  
TJ Brown, Colorado Environmental Coalition, at (303) 405-6706.*