

# ANATOMY OF A WILDERNESS PROPOSAL

## *A Wilderness Matters centerfold*

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.

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 Ptarmigan A units.

To better focus our work and public discussion of it, we decided to postpone for now discussion of all but a tiny portion of the proposal in Garfield County – some 229,000 acres, mostly in areas ringing the Flat Tops.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

