

113TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 841

To designate certain Federal land in the San Juan National Forest in the State of Colorado as wilderness, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 25, 2013

Mr. BENNET (for himself and Mr. UDALL of Colorado) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To designate certain Federal land in the San Juan National Forest in the State of Colorado as wilderness, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Hermosa Creek Water-
5 shed Protection Act of 2013”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds that—

8 (1) the ecological health and integrity of the
9 Hermosa Creek Watershed and the economic health

1 of the surrounding communities that rely on the Wa-
2 tershed are connected;

3 (2) the Watershed—

4 (A) is the only area in the State that is not
5 a unit of National Wilderness Preservation Sys-
6 tem to achieve a designation of outstanding
7 waters by the State;

8 (B) provides a crucial source of clean
9 drinking water for the residents of the Animas
10 River Valley and the city of Durango, Colorado;
11 and

12 (C) provides high quality agricultural
13 water supplies from Hermosa Creek and the
14 Animas River;

15 (3) the Watershed helps ensure the economic
16 prosperity of local communities in the area that de-
17 pend on the Watershed for water supplies, recre-
18 ation, hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, camping, ski-
19 ing and related winter activities, off-road vehicle
20 travel, scientific research, mineral extraction, and
21 sustainable natural resource development;

22 (4) the world-class Hermosa Creek trail net-
23 work contains outstanding single track mountain
24 bike riding, backcountry hiking, equestrian riding,
25 and motorcycle riding;

1 (5) the Watershed provides visitors the oppor-
2 tunity to enjoy the tremendous scenic, natural, cul-
3 tural, and recreational resources of the area;

4 (6) ecologically sustainable grazing has been
5 conducted in a manner that has preserved the high
6 quality of the Watershed;

7 (7) the native Colorado River cutthroat trout
8 fishery located in the Watershed—

9 (A) is one of the most important fisheries
10 in the State;

11 (B) is crucial for the long-term survival of
12 the cutthroat trout; and

13 (C) provides an opportunity for anglers to
14 have a catch and release fishery for the cut-
15 throat trout;

16 (8) the work of Colorado Parks and Wildlife to
17 enhance the fishery referred to in paragraph (7) has
18 been a tremendous success and a great example of
19 cooperative conservation efforts to recover an imper-
20 iled species of fish;

21 (9) the Watershed—

22 (A) provides some of the best backcountry
23 elk habitat in the State; and

24 (B) supports outstanding hunting opportu-
25 nities;

1 (10) the large areas of undisturbed forest in the
2 Watershed (including some of the best stands of old
3 growth ponderosa pine in the State) provide excel-
4 lent wildlife habitat and excellent opportunities for
5 solitude and backcountry recreation; and

6 (11) designation of the Hermosa Creek Wilder-
7 ness Area, Watershed Protection Area, and Special
8 Management Area would protect those areas in per-
9 petuity for the benefit of the people of the United
10 States.

11 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

12 In this Act:

13 (1) COUNTY.—The term “County” means La
14 Plata County, Colorado.

15 (2) MAP.—The term “Map” means the map en-
16 titled “Hermosa Creek Proposed Watershed Protec-
17 tion Area, 2012” and dated March 28, 2012.

18 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
19 the Secretary of Agriculture.

20 (4) SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREA.—The term
21 “Special Management Area” means the Hermosa
22 Creek Special Management Area designated by sec-
23 tion 5(a).

24 (5) STATE.—The term “State” means the State
25 of Colorado.

1 (6) WATERSHED PROTECTION AREA.—The
2 term “Watershed Protection Area” means the
3 Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Area des-
4 ignated by section 4(a).

5 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF HERMOSA CREEK WATERSHED**
6 **PROTECTION AREA.**

7 (a) DESIGNATION.—Certain Federal land in the San
8 Juan National Forest comprising approximately 107,886
9 acres, as generally depicted on the Map, is designated as
10 the “Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Area”.

11 (b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the Watershed Pro-
12 tection Area are—

13 (1) to maintain the cultural, economic, and eco-
14 logical health of the Hermosa Creek Watershed and
15 the surrounding communities that rely on the Wa-
16 tershed;

17 (2) to protect the purity of water that comes
18 from the Hermosa Creek Watershed and supplies
19 residents of the Animas River Valley and the city of
20 Durango, Colorado, with clean drinking water;

21 (3) to protect the purity of, and water supply
22 from, the Hermosa Creek Watershed for agricultural
23 purposes, including irrigation and stockwater uses;

24 (4) to enhance the economic prosperity of local
25 communities in the area who depend on the area for

1 water, recreation, and sustainable natural resource
2 uses;

3 (5) to protect and provide visitors the oppor-
4 tunity to enjoy the recreational, geological, cultural,
5 natural, scientific, recreational, wildlife, riparian,
6 historical, educational, and scenic resources of the
7 Watershed;

8 (6) to provide world class opportunities for ski-
9 ing, biking, hiking, fishing, hunting, horseback
10 riding, snowmobiling, motorcycle riding,
11 snowshoeing, and camping;

12 (7) to provide for economic and natural re-
13 source development (including sustainable grazing,
14 vegetation management, beneficial uses of water,
15 and mineral extraction) in a manner consistent with
16 protecting the overall integrity of the Watershed;

17 (8) to protect the native Colorado River cut-
18 throat trout fishery located in the Watershed;

19 (9) to designate the Hermosa Creek Wilderness
20 Area and the Special Management Area; and

21 (10) to conserve, protect, and manage for a
22 healthy Hermosa Creek Watershed for the long-term
23 ecological integrity of the Watershed and the long-
24 term economic health of surrounding communities
25 by allowing sustainable economic development and

1 traditional natural resource development in a matter
2 consistent with the purposes described in paragraphs
3 (1) through (9).

4 **SEC. 5. DESIGNATION OF HERMOSA CREEK SPECIAL MAN-**
5 **AGEMENT AREA.**

6 (a) DESIGNATION.—Subject to valid existing rights,
7 certain Federal land in the San Juan National Forest
8 comprising approximately 68,289 acres, as generally de-
9 picted on the Map, is designated as the “Hermosa Creek
10 Special Management Area”.

11 (b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Special Manage-
12 ment Area is to conserve and protect for the benefit of
13 present and future generations the watershed, geological,
14 cultural, natural, scientific, recreational, wildlife, riparian,
15 historical, educational, and scenic resources and values of
16 the Special Management Area.

17 (c) ADMINISTRATION.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall admin-
19 ister the Special Management Area—

20 (A) in a manner that—

21 (i) conserves, protects, and enhances
22 the resources and values of the Special
23 Management Area described in subsection
24 (b); and

1 (ii) protects a viable population of
2 Colorado River Cutthroat Trout; and

3 (B) in accordance with—

4 (i) the National Forest Management
5 Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.);

6 (ii) this Act; and

7 (iii) any other applicable laws.

8 (2) USES.—

9 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall
10 allow only such uses of the Special Management
11 Area that the Secretary determines would fur-
12 ther the purposes described in subsection (b).

13 (B) MOTORIZED VEHICLES.—

14 (i) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided
15 in clause (ii) and as needed for administra-
16 tive purposes or to respond to an emer-
17 gency, the use of motorized vehicles in the
18 Special Management Area shall be per-
19 mitted only on roads and trails designated
20 for use by such vehicles by the Secretary.

21 (ii) OVER-SNOW VEHICLES.—The Sec-
22 retary may authorize the use of snowmo-
23 biles and other over-snow vehicles within
24 the Special Management Area—

1 (I) during periods of adequate
2 snow cover during the winter season;
3 and

4 (II) subject to such terms and
5 conditions as the Secretary may re-
6 quire.

7 (C) GRAZING.—The Secretary shall permit
8 grazing within the Special Management Area,
9 where established before the date of enactment
10 of this Act subject to all applicable laws (includ-
11 ing regulations) and Executive orders.

12 (D) PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES.—Within the
13 area of the Special Management Area identified
14 on the Map as “East Hermosa Area” the fol-
15 lowing activities shall be prohibited:

16 (i) New permanent or temporary road
17 construction or the renovation of existing
18 nonsystem roads, except as allowed under
19 the final rule entitled “Special Areas;
20 Roadless Area Conservation; Applicability
21 to the National Forests in Colorado” (77
22 Fed. Reg. 39576 (July 3, 2012)).

23 (ii) Projects undertaken for the pur-
24 pose of harvesting commercial timber
25 (other than activities relating to the har-

1 vest of merchantable products that are by-
2 products of activities conducted for ecologi-
3 cal restoration or to further the purposes
4 described in this Act).

5 (d) MAP AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after
7 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary
8 shall prepare a map and a legal description of the
9 Special Management Area.

10 (2) FORCE OF LAW.—The map and legal de-
11 scription prepared under paragraph (1) shall have
12 the same force and effect as if included in this Act,
13 except that the Secretary may correct clerical and
14 typographical errors in the map and legal descrip-
15 tion.

16 (3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The map and legal
17 description prepared under paragraph (1) shall be
18 on file and available for public inspection in the ap-
19 propriate offices of the Forest Service.

20 (e) INCORPORATION OF ACQUIRED LAND AND INTER-
21 ESTS IN LAND.—Any land or interest in land that is ac-
22 quired by the United States within the boundary of the
23 Special Management Area shall—

24 (1) become part of the Special Management
25 Area;

1 (2) be withdrawn in accordance with subsection
2 (h); and

3 (3) be managed in accordance with—

4 (A) this Act; and

5 (B) any other applicable laws.

6 (f) FISH AND WILDLIFE.—Nothing in this Act af-
7 fects the jurisdiction or responsibility of the State with
8 respect to fish and wildlife in the State.

9 (g) STATE AND FEDERAL WATER MANAGEMENT.—
10 Nothing in this section affects the potential for develop-
11 ment, operation, or maintenance of a water storage res-
12 ervoir at the site in the Special Management Area that
13 is identified in—

14 (1) pages 17 through 20 of the Statewide
15 Water Supply Initiative studies prepared by the Col-
16 orado Water Conservation Board and issued by the
17 State in November 2004; and

18 (2) page 27 of the Colorado Dam Site Inven-
19 tory prepared by the Colorado Water Conservation
20 Board and dated August 1996.

21 (h) WITHDRAWAL.—Subject to valid rights in exist-
22 ence on the date of enactment of this Act, the Federal
23 land within the Special Management Area is withdrawn
24 from—

1 (1) all forms of entry, appropriation, and dis-
2 posal under the public land laws;

3 (2) location, entry, and patent under the mining
4 laws; and

5 (3) operation of the mineral leasing, mineral
6 materials, and geothermal leasing laws.

7 (i) ADJACENT MANAGEMENT.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Special Management
9 Area designated by subsection (a) or the wilderness
10 designated by section 2(a)(22) of the Colorado Wil-
11 derness Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1132 note; Public
12 Law 103–77; 107 Stat. 756, 114 Stat. 1955, 116
13 Stat. 1055) (as added by section 6(a)) shall not cre-
14 ate a protective perimeter or buffer zone around the
15 Special Management Area or wilderness.

16 (2) NONWILDERNESS ACTIVITIES.—The fact
17 that nonwilderness activities or uses can be seen or
18 heard from areas within the wilderness designated
19 by section 2(a)(22) of the Colorado Wilderness Act
20 of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1132 note; Public Law 103–77;
21 107 Stat. 756, 114 Stat. 1955, 116 Stat. 1055) (as
22 added by section 6(a)) shall not preclude the con-
23 duct of the activities or uses outside the boundary
24 of the wilderness.

1 (j) WINTER SKIING AND RELATED WINTER ACTIVI-
 2 TIES.—Nothing in this Act alters or limits—

3 (1) a permit held by a ski area;

4 (2) the implementation of the activities gov-
 5 erned by a ski area permit; or

6 (3) the authority of the Secretary to modify or
 7 expand an existing ski area permit.

8 (k) VEGETATION MANAGEMENT.—Nothing in this
 9 section prevents the Secretary from conducting vegetation
 10 management projects within the Special Management
 11 Area—

12 (1) subject to—

13 (A) such reasonable regulations, policies,
 14 and practices as the Secretary determines ap-
 15 propriate; and

16 (B) all applicable laws (including regula-
 17 tions); and

18 (2) in a manner consistent with—

19 (A) the purposes described in subsection
 20 (b); and

21 (B) this section.

22 (l) WILDFIRE, INSECT, AND DISEASE MANAGE-
 23 MENT.—Consistent with this section, the Secretary may
 24 take any measures that the Secretary determines to be
 25 necessary to control fire, insects, and diseases in the Spe-

1 cial Management Area, including, as the Secretary deter-
2 mines to be appropriate, the coordination of the measures
3 with the State or a local agency.

4 (m) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—Not later than 3 years
5 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall
6 develop a management plan for the long-term protection
7 and management of the Special Management Area that—

8 (1) takes into account public input; and

9 (2) includes a certification by the Secretary
10 that there are adequate opportunities in the Special
11 Management Area for each of the recreational op-
12 portunities referred to in section 4(b)(6).

13 **SEC. 6. ADDITIONS TO THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRES-**
14 **ERVATION SYSTEM.**

15 (a) DESIGNATION OF WILDERNESS.—Section 2(a) of
16 the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1132
17 note; Public Law 103–77; 107 Stat. 756, 114 Stat. 1955,
18 116 Stat. 1055) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
19 lowing:

20 “(22) Certain land within the San Juan Na-
21 tional Forest which comprise approximately 37,236
22 acres, as generally depicted on the map entitled
23 ‘Hermosa Creek Proposed Watershed Protection
24 Area, 2012’ and dated March 28, 2012, and which

1 shall be known as the ‘Hermosa Creek Wilder-
2 ness’.”.

3 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Any reference in the Wilder-
4 ness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) to the effective date
5 of that Act shall be considered to be a reference to the
6 date of enactment of this Act for purposes of admin-
7 istering the wilderness area designated by section 2(a)(22)
8 of the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993 (16 U.S.C. 1132
9 note; Public Law 103–77; 107 Stat. 756, 114 Stat. 1955,
10 116 Stat. 1055) (as added by subsection (a)).

11 (c) FIRE, INSECTS, AND DISEASES.—As provided in
12 section 4(d)(1) of the Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C.
13 1133(d)(1)), within the wilderness areas designated by
14 section 2(a)(22) of the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993
15 (16 U.S.C. 1132 note; Public Law 103–77; 107 Stat. 756,
16 114 Stat. 1955, 116 Stat. 1055) (as added by subsection
17 (a)), the Secretary may take any measure that the Sec-
18 retary determines to be necessary to control fire, insects,
19 and diseases, subject to such terms and conditions as the
20 Secretary determines to be appropriate.

21 **SEC. 7. DURANGO AREA MINERAL WITHDRAWAL.**

22 (a) WITHDRAWAL.—Subject to valid existing rights,
23 the land and mineral interests described in subsection (b)
24 are withdrawn from all forms of—

1 (1) entry, appropriation, or disposal under pub-
2 lic land laws;

3 (2) location, entry, and patent under the mining
4 laws; and

5 (3) disposition under all laws relating to min-
6 eral leasing, geothermal leasing, or mineral mate-
7 rials.

8 (b) DESCRIPTION OF LAND AND MINERAL INTER-
9 ESTS.—The land and mineral interests referred to in sub-
10 section (a) are—

11 (1) the approximately 13,086 acres of Federal
12 land depicted on the map entitled “Perins Peak &
13 Animas City Mountain, Horse Gulch and Lake
14 Nighthorse mineral withdrawal” and dated April 5,
15 2013; and

16 (2) all Federal mineral interests contained with-
17 in the boundaries of the map described in paragraph
18 (1).

19 (c) BUFFER.—Nothing in this section may require—

20 (1) the creation of a protective perimeter or
21 buffer area outside the boundaries of the withdrawal
22 area described in subsection (b); or

23 (2) any prohibition on activities outside of the
24 boundaries of the withdrawal area described in sub-

1 section (b) that can be seen or heard from within
2 the boundaries of the withdrawal area.

3 **SEC. 8. CONVEYANCE OF BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**
4 **LAND TO LA PLATA COUNTY.**

5 (a) IN GENERAL.—On the expiration of the permit
6 numbered COC 64651 (09) and dated February 24, 2009,
7 the Secretary of the Interior shall convey to the County,
8 without consideration and subject to valid existing rights,
9 all right, title, and interest of the United States in and
10 to the land described in subsection (b).

11 (b) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in
12 subsection (a) consists of approximately 111 acres of land
13 managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Tres Rios
14 District, Colorado, as generally depicted on the map enti-
15 tled “La Plata County Grandview Conveyance” and dated
16 March 27, 2013.

17 (c) MAP AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION.—

18 (1) IN GENERAL.—As soon as practicable after
19 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of
20 the Interior shall finalize the legal description of the
21 parcel to be conveyed under this section.

22 (2) MINOR ERRORS.—The Secretary of the In-
23 terior may correct any minor error in—

24 (A) the map; or

25 (B) the legal description.

1 (3) AVAILABILITY.—The map and legal descrip-
2 tion shall be on file and available for public inspec-
3 tion in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of
4 Land Management.

5 (d) USE OF CONVEYED LAND.—The land conveyed
6 under this section shall be used only for any public pur-
7 pose consistent with uses allowed under the Act of June
8 14, 1926 (commonly known as the “Recreation and Public
9 Purposes Act”) (43 U.S.C. 869 et seq.).

10 (e) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary of the
11 Interior shall require the County to pay all survey costs
12 and other administrative costs necessary for the prepara-
13 tion and completion of any patents for, and transfers of
14 title to, the land described in subsection (b).

15 (f) CONDITIONS.—As a condition of the conveyance
16 under subsection (a), the County shall agree in writing
17 to pay any administrative costs associated with the convey-
18 ance including the costs of any environmental, wildlife,
19 cultural, or historical resources studies.

20 **SEC. 9. RELEASE OF WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS.**

21 (a) FINDING.—Congress finds that the land de-
22 scribed in subsection (c) has been adequately studied for
23 wilderness designation under section 603 of the Federal
24 Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C.
25 1782).

1 (b) RELEASE.—The land described in subsection
2 (c)—

3 (1) is no longer subject to section 603(c) of the
4 Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
5 (43 U.S.C. 1782(c)); and

6 (2) shall be managed in accordance with land
7 management plans adopted under section 202 of
8 that Act (43 U.S.C. 1712).

9 (c) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in
10 subsections (a) and (b) is the approximately 461 acres of
11 land in the West Needles Contiguous Wilderness Study
12 Area of San Juan County, Colorado, that is depicted on
13 the map entitled “West Needles Contiguous Wilderness
14 Study Area Release Area” and dated April 5, 2013.

○