

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
375 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lauren Boebert
1713 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0603

Dear Senator Bennet, Senator Hickenlooper and Representative Boebert:

Delta County Board of Commissioners appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act (GORP) and we have been involved with Gunnison County on this proposed legislation for a number of years. Delta County appreciates the extensive public process that Gunnison County and Senator Bennet have taken to address specific concerns and landscape management. Delta County formally supports the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act (GORP) now with the following amendments:

1. Withdrawal for the Federal lands in the North Fork Valley as shown in Exhibit A from the mineral leasing laws with respect to oil and gas. The point of consensus does not impact private land, private minerals, or valid existing rights, and it would not preclude the maintenance of rights-of-way and other infrastructure.
2. Removal of the proposed Black Mesa Special Management Area from the draft GORP legislation.
3. Modification of the Lamborn Wilderness Area boundary to allow for the Paonia Winter Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project's critical wildlife habitat vegetation treatments.

4. The addition to the proposed GORP legislation of a new section providing that existing motorized use on the Gunnison River within the Gunnison Gorge Wilderness Area may continue as established before the designation of the Wilderness.

Delta County understands that this legislation will also include a designation of No Surface Occupancy as depicted in Exhibit A. Development of valid existing rights will be allowed to progress under the lease requirements as administered within federal, state, and local regulations. The protections of water resources, air quality, visual resources, and related traffic issues must and would be addressed by thorough site-specific reviews and resulting conditions of approvals.


Specific to Colorado Outdoor and Recreation Act (CORE) Act details a Greater Thompson Divide Fugitive Coal Mine Methane Use Pilot Program (section 305 and 306) that would allow for the establishment of a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) pilot program that would provide for the leasing of fugitive methane emissions and allow for the capping or destruction of fugitive methane emissions. The Fugitive Methane Emission Leasing Program would be subject to valid existing rights and will encourage the capture of fugitive methane emissions for beneficial use, such as generating electrical power, producing useable heat, transporting the methane to market, transforming the fugitive methane emissions into a different marketable material; or if the beneficial use of the fugitive methane emissions is not feasible, the destruction of the fugitive methane emissions by flaring. Additionally, Section 305 and 306 would provide the regulatory framework to BLM to allow for the methane to be leased under a valid existing Federal coal lease. This certainty and direction would allow for existing methane to be flared and electricity projects to expand and continue to offer viable solutions. Delta County is in support of these particular sections of the CORE Act.

The proposed map and letter are the first steps in a lengthy process and Delta County will be at the table during the drafting, editing, amending and final process. Any attempt to modify language or maps without the involvement of Delta County will require the Board of County Commissioners withdrawing their support of the proposed legislation. Delta County looks forward to working with all stakeholders during the legislative and regulatory process.

Sincerely,
Delta Board of County Commissioners


Mike Lane, Chairman


Wendell A. Koontz, Vice Chairman


Don Suppes, Commissioner