

# SUPPORT THE GUNNISON OUTDOOR RESOURCES PROTECTION (GORP) ACT!



The Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act is the collaborative product of a locally-driven, grassroots effort initiated in 2014. The Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) drew together a coalition of stakeholders, representing diverse interests, and tasked them with developing a single vision for the protection and conservation of 1.7 million acres of public lands in Gunnison County. Stakeholders include groups in ranching, water, conservation, motorized recreation, mountain biking, hunting and angling. Recognizing growing visitation and uses on the Gunnison Basin, preserving the land for the benefit of the community was a top priority.

## THE GORP ACT WOULD...

- Provide for a healthy, sustainable economy and clean water resources;
- Protect public lands for their natural, scenic, scientific, cultural, watershed, recreation, and wildlife values;
- Support historic uses of public lands in Gunnison County;
- Permanently withdraw from oil and gas development most surface-managed Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands in the North Fork Valley portion of Delta County;
- Ensure continued public access to the Gunnison Forks (Pleasure Park) boat ramp.



## BACKGROUND



**2014:** Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) begins as a collaborative effort between stakeholders seeking to balance public lands management needs in Gunnison County.

**2016:** Gunnison Board of County Commissioners with the support of Senator Bennet's office convened the Gunnison Working Group for Public Lands.

**2016 - 2017:** Working Group meets monthly with the goal of developing a single, consensus based proposal. The initial GPLI report was released in January 2017.

**2017- 2019:** GPLI Working Group conducts extensive community outreach. As a result of these conversations, GPLI released a revised proposal in January 2019.

**2019- 2022:** With continued outreach, GPLI develops legislative recommendations based on their consensus proposal and delivers them to Senator Bennet's office.

**2022:** Based on GPLI's recommendations, Senator Bennet's office releases draft legislation, the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act or GORP Act.

**2022:** Western Slope Conservation Center (WSSC) leads local efforts in the North Fork Valley to encourage Sen. Bennet to include lands within Delta County in the GORP Act.

**2022-2024:** WSSC builds support from community members, local business owners, and the Town of Paonia to protect land in Delta County and the North Fork Valley Watershed as part of the GORP Act. In April 2024, the Delta County Commissioners formally supported the GORP Act.



# Why is the GORP Act Important for the North Fork Valley?

The GORP Act would provide for the long-term management of public lands in Gunnison County by recognizing Wilderness and designating other Special Management Areas (SMAs) which generally provide protections with a specific focus (e.g. Wildlife Conservation Area).

In Delta County, restrictions on new oil and gas leasing and development are a welcome new addition to the GORP Act, resulting in large part from WSCC's sustained advocacy efforts. If enacted, these protections will provide a direct clean air, water, and environmental benefit for the North Fork Valley community.

The North Fork Valley Watershed withdrawal would prevent oil and gas development on most surface-managed BLM lands in Delta County, which includes Jumbo Mountain and the Town of Paonia's source water area. The GORP Act also includes a No Surface Occupancy restriction on oil and gas development in the Currant Creek, Electric Mountain, and Elk Park Roadless Areas in the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests, providing additional certainty for significant landscapes in the North Fork Valley.

While this oil and gas withdrawal does not fully protect the entire North Fork Valley, it protects areas like Jumbo Mountain and the Town of Paonia's drinking water source areas, which are currently open to oil and gas development.

## North Fork Valley GORP Act Areas

- **Lamborn Wilderness Addition** extends from the current West Elk Wilderness boundary, following the Roadless Area boundary west, to the Gunnison County line. **Erickson Springs Wilderness Addition** incorporates the Munsey-Ruby Stock Trail into the Raggeds Wilderness, from the existing Raggeds Wilderness boundary to the Raggeds Trail. A Wilderness designation prohibits new mining, drilling, or other extractive processes. It protects the natural and undeveloped character of the land and allows for only primitive (non-mechanized) recreation.
- **Pilot Knob and Clear Fork Special Management Areas** are generally in the upper North Fork watershed north of the town of Somerset and have important roadless and wildlife values.
- **Beckwiths Special Management Area and Horse Ranch Park Recreation Area** are in the Kebler Pass area off of the West Elk Loop Scenic Byway. They would be managed with an emphasis on conservation and recreation.
- **Munsey Creek Wildlife Conservation Area** provides for the potential development of the Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail while limiting new routes along the Raggeds Trail.
- Permanent protections for the **North Fork Valley Watershed** and ensured public access to the **Gunnison Forks boat ramp** to help enjoy it!

