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Title:

Comments: We, the undersigned businesses from across Colorado, are writing in support of the proposed 20-year mineral withdrawal for the Thompson Divide and request you move quickly to finalize this rule to protect one of the many areas that mean so much to the state of Colorado.

This mineral withdrawal is important for a variety of reasons. From the importance of protected landscapes to public land, wildlife, and community health to the economic benefits that come from healthy public lands to the broad base of support for protecting the Thompson Divide it is a no brainer to conserve the Thompson Divide.

Protected landscapes are critical to the health of nature and our communities. Oil and gas development has a demonstrated impact on people's health today, via ozone and other toxic pollutants, and in the future in the form of climate change and habitat destruction. By limiting development in areas that are too special to drill, like the Thompson Divide, we can protect our communities health from pollutants. These protections will also ensure the habitat connectivity and integrity of the over 200,000 acres of mostly roadless habitat, spanning a dozen watersheds. In a world of rapid development, protecting the Thompson Divide is a necessity for our health and the things that make Colorado such a special place to call home.

The economics also make sense. Recent data shows that outdoor recreation has overtaken oil and gas in terms of economic output. A recent study shows that the Thompson Divide supports more than 300 jobs and generates more than \$30 million each year. Allowing oil and gas development in the area would decimate the ranching, recreation, and hunting that bring so many to enjoy this valley to support our local business and economy.

For nearly two decades ranchers, environmentalists, hunters and anglers, recreationists, and businesses have come together to design the boundaries and stipulations surrounding this mineral withdrawal, even supporting a permanent withdrawal as part of the CORE Act. While we wait for Congress to finalize passage of the CORE Act and protect this jewel permanently, it's imperative that the Thompson Divide receives protection from you, the managing agencies, via this common sense proposal.

Thank you for all of your work to manage the public lands here in Colorado. We appreciate all you do for this great state and look forward to seeing the protections quickly implemented for the Thompson Divide.