



August 4, 2014

The Honorable Mark Udall Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Testimony in Support of S. 1794, S. 2392, and S.2602.

Dear Chairman Udall, Ranking Member Portman and members of the subcommittee:

Thank you holding the hearing on July 23, 2014 to discuss a suite of conservation and river related bills. We appreciate this opportunity to provide written testimony for the record on several of these bills that are especially important to our members.

American Whitewater is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission of protecting and restoring our nation's whitewater resources and enhancing opportunities to enjoy them safely. Our members are predominantly non-commercial whitewater kayakers, canoeists, and rafters. Our organization has a 60-year history of working with communities to protect and restore rivers that play a vital role in their economies and lifestyles. It is in this context that we hereby offer our support and testimony on the following bills.

1. Browns Canyon National Monument and Wilderness Act (S. 1794)

Browns Canyon of the Arkansas River comprises roughly 22,000 acres of Forest Service and BLM lands in Chaffee County. The area is renowned for providing year-round opportunities to climb, paddle, mountain bike, ski and hike.



By preserving this incredible landscape that surrounds the Arkansas River, we can ensure that visitors and citizens alike can continue to benefit from inspiring recreational experiences, and continue to sustain and grow our local and regional economy.

People from across Colorado and the country visit the region to enjoy these activities, and it is critical that Browns Canyon receive recognition and protection as a National Monument and Wilderness to both ensure that the area will remain open to outdoor recreational pursuits and to preserve Colorado's outdoor legacy for future generations.

For over a decade, there have been bipartisan efforts to protect this unique area, and we have worked directly with local landowners, water rights owners, and state and federal land managers to support this effort to designate the area as a National Monument and Wilderness. S.1794 would do just this, and specifically would:

- Preserve opportunities for solitude and human--powered recreation including rafting and kayaking.
- Ensure that the outdoor recreation opportunities and natural legacy of this unique area remains intact for future generations.
- Retain cooperative management of area though federal and state partnership.
- Permanently assure that no new mining activities would damage the area's watershed or riparian habitat.

We support this bill as an appropriate and timely action to protect the wilderness-quality of the Browns Canyon landscape and to protect the values and uses that our members hold dear.



2. East Rosebud Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (S. 2392)

The East Rosebud Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Act would designate 20 miles of an outstanding whitewater stream that courses through the Beartooth Mountains and onto the plains below. The stream offers paddlers an intense whitewater experience and anglers excellent fishing opportunities. Many hikers also begin trips in the Beartooth Mountains from the banks of East Rosebud Creek, and families often take advantage of the campground filled with the sights and sounds of the crystal clear stream. It is a gem, in an area of incomparable beauty and national significance for its expansive wild and working landscapes.

American Whitewater analyzed and opposed a recent proposal to dam and de-water a section of East Rosebud Creek. This type of hydropower technology is well over 100 years old, and we have witnessed the impacts on fish, wildlife, and recreation firsthand on countless other rivers. During the process of reviewing the dam proposal we witnessed a genuine upwelling of concern and opposition in the local and regional community. We joined this chorus of support for a free-flowing East Rosebud Creek, and ultimately the developer decided not to pursue the project.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was authored to provide a balance between developing rivers with dams, and protecting rivers with designation. So far this balance has not been struck. Our nation has over 75,000 large dams and as of 2012 only 203 Wild and Scenic Rivers. It is worth noting that East Rosebud's sister watershed, West Rosebud Creek, has been developed for hydropower production. Designating East Rosebud Creek would offer the exact kind of balance envisioned when Congress signed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.



The time we have spent with local citizens, including American Whitewater members, local homeowners, and ranchers in the East Rosebud area has convinced us that S.2392 is broadly supported, imminently justified, and timely. We enthusiastically support the East Rosebud Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

3. Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area Act (S. 2602)

The Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area Act would support our regional goals of long-term conservation of rivers and enhancement of the recreational experiences they provide. Specific whitewater runs that will benefit include the Middle Fork Snoqualmie River, Ernie's Gorge on the North Fork Snoqualmie, the Cooper River, the Cle Elum River, and other spectacular whitewater runs.

National Heritage Area designation will create a framework that will greatly assist our organization's goals and further empower a consensus-based approach for the continued stewardship of the Greenway and its river resources. As an active member of the coalition of groups represented by the Mountains to Sound Greenway, we have witnessed first-hand the benefits of collaboration between agencies, non-profits and private organizations that has yielded tremendous successes in conserving, managing and improving the Greenway landscape. Specifically we have been able to work collaboratively on both river conservation projects as well as initiatives designed to improve public access to the water. These efforts have both protected and enhanced the quality of the recreational experience the Greenway rivers provide and would not have been possible without the active role the Greenway serves in encouraging collaboration among stakeholders.



National Heritage Area designation will build on our existing partnerships and forge new ones by providing a forum for addressing the shared challenges of maintaining the Greenway legacy.

The past 20 years of success have laid an extraordinary foundation and now it is time to gain formal recognition of this iconic area. We support the Mountains to Sound Greenway National Heritage Area Act as the most effective approach to formalizing the Greenway vision of dynamic communities, safe and accessible outdoor recreation and healthy ecosystems.

Thank you for considering this testimony,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Colburn'.

Kevin Colburn
National Stewardship Director

Nathan T. Fey
Colorado Stewardship Director

Tom O'Keefe
Pacific Northwest Stewardship Director

American Whitewater
PO Box 1540
Cullowhee, NC 28723
(828)-712-4825