

ON SCREEN WILD TEN

By DEB ACORD THE GAZETTE TELEGRAPH, COLORADO SPRINGS, CO FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17TH, 2003

“The Wild Ten” is a group of 11 areas worthy of wilderness designation, says the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition:

Directions to Beaver Creek, one of the closest areas to Colorado Springs, are noted. To explore the other areas, use current topographic maps, U.S. Forest Service map for the Pike/San Isabel National Forests, and “Colorado BLM Wildlands,” by Mark Pearson and John Fielder (Westcliffe Publishers).

1. Beaver Creek.

A designated wilderness study area for more than 20 years, this remote land lies to the south and west of Colorado Springs, near Penrose. The study area covers 20,000 acres. The Wilderness Coalition has expanded its existing boundaries to include 38,400 acres. Almost 5,000 acres are in Pike National Forest; 2,000 acres are state land; the rest is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The area is thought to have the greatest concentration of mountain lions in the state; it also has elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, wild turkeys, golden eagles, roadrunners, tarantulas, rattlesnakes, endangered Mexican spotted owls and the elusive ringtail.

Access:

Take Colorado Highway 115 south from Colorado Springs for 32 miles. Turn right at the Brush Hollow Reservoir turnoff, Fremont County Road 123. Take 123 for 5 miles to County Road 132; turn right on 132 and drive 11 miles to the parking area/trailhead, past the trailhead for Beaver Creek State Wildlife Area. (Road dead-ends at the trailhead).

2. Browns Canyon/Aspen Ridge.

About 35,000 acres are proposed; 8,000 are administered by the BLM and the rest by the U.S. Forest Service. Between Buena Vista and Salida, this area features piñon-juniper forest and gulches that vary from sandy paths to dramatic gashes in the rock that drop hundreds of feet. Bighorn sheep roam this land, along with mule deer, elk, bears, mountain lions and coyotes.

3. Additions to Buffalo Peaks Wilderness Area.

One of the most recently named wilderness areas, Buffalo Peaks was established just 10 years ago, between Fairplay and Buena Vista. The existing area, 43,410 acres, is a high-elevation landscape ranging from 9,000 feet to more than 13,000. The proposed addition will add another 32,000 acres, from the northwest side on the

Arkansas River drainage toward Weston Pass, in an area called Big Union; around Marmot Peak and Salt Creek. The new section could add biological diversity, at a lower elevation.

4. Farnum Peak.

The coalition suggests 17,800 acres for this land, which lies to the north and west of Wilkerson Pass at the lip of South Park. The land runs north-south, almost to the old Tarryall Reservoir. All is Forest Service-managed.

5. Grape Creek—Tanner Peak.

This land near Cañon City covers nearly 44,000 acres, from 6,000 feet in elevation to more than 9,600 feet. Dramatic cliffs attract bald eagles and golden eagles. Chunks of this land are administered by the BLM; the rest is national forest.

6. McIntyre Hills.

This BLM Wilderness Study Area covers 18,000 acres of rugged country on the south side of the Arkansas River canyon; near Parkdale and Texas Creek.

7. Pikes Peak West.

No acreage is available for this land, and it currently is a busy multi-use area. It includes the popular Craggs trail and campground, and the trailhead for the increasingly popular Devil's Playground Trail to the summit of Pikes Peak.

8. Badger Creek.

Covering 18,000 acres, this area lies east of Salida and west of Cotopaxi. It is a rugged, forested canyon area. Portions are managed by the Forest Service, other portions by BLM. Private and public landowners have been improving the upstream watershed, resulting in better downstream riparian areas.

9. Table Mountain.

Acreage is pending while coalition members continue their inventory. This is the larger and higher counterpart to McIntyre Hills, across the Arkansas River on the north side between Parkdale and Texas Creek.

10. Thirtynine Mile Mountain.

This stretch of 12,500 acres is just south of Elevenmile Reservoir between Saddle Mountain Road toward Guffey and Colorado Highway 9 from Fairplay to Parkdale. It features dark timber for elk and pronghorn, and is a transition zone between the South Park open grassland and the forest.

11. Weston Peak.

Covering 20,500 acres, this land lies just north of Weston Pass and is near the proposed Buffalo Peaks Addition. It's a high-elevation area at about 10,500 feet or

higher, with some lower elevation riparian valleys.
SOURCE: Central Colorado
Wilderness Coalition

THE DETAILS TAKE A LOOK

The "Wild Ten" will be featured in a program 7-9 p.m. Thursday in the Carnegie Reading Room of Penrose Public Library, 20 N. Cascade Ave. Members of the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition and other groups will present slides and narration of potential wilderness areas in the region. The program also will feature the southern Colorado premiere of the awardwinning video, "Arctic Dance: The Mardy Murie Story," a film biography of the woman widely considered the "mother of the American wilderness movement." The program is free, but seating may be limited. For more information, call John Stansfield at 1-303-660-5849 or e-mail jorcstan@bewellnet.com



CAROL LAWRENCE, THE GAZETTE

WILD AND REMOTE:

Stafford Gulch meets up with Railroad Gulch near the southern border of the proposed Browns Canyon Wilderness area, just north and west of Salida.