

To: Colorado Wilderness Recreation Forum  
c/o Mr. Ralph Swain  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
USDA Forest Service

It was my pleasure to join you in the first Colorado Wilderness Recreation Forum in Golden, this past Tuesday, April 18. The interest and energy in support of the Forest Service and management of the Colorado's 14ers was impressive. I appreciate the generous attention you showed toward my presentation of results from our book, *The Multiple Values of Wilderness* (Venture Publishing 2005). I also appreciate the efforts of Ralph Swain, Loretta McEllhiney, and Steve Sherwood in organizing the Forum. These are truly dedicated public land managers.

There are a number of points from my presentation that I would like to revisit with you as your group moves forward with additional forums and field trips. They include:

- The federal land system came about through the deliberate efforts of some key people who saw the value of reserving some of the country's natural lands for the future. From National Forests to National Parks and other federal lands, they helped shape a system of federal lands then and now unrivaled in the world. Their intention was that all Americans would share in the ownership of these lands for our mutual benefit, now and through the future.
- Although our federal lands are mostly natural, they are increasingly influenced by human use and presence. A major driver of this influence is population growth. As world population grows, so too does the United States' population. Projections to the year 2100 indicate a likely doubling of population. With greater population comes development and conversion of private lands, urban and rural, including private lands next to federal lands.
- Land development is accelerating, especially in many of the sections of the country that have high natural amenities. Often the most attractive natural amenities are the federal lands. This is certainly true of Colorado, including this state's heritage of National Forests.
- Among the federal lands, there still are areas that are mostly wild and little influenced by human activity. Many of these wild lands have been designated as areas within the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Most Americans tell us they support designation of federal wild lands as Wilderness, and many feel we should designate even more of these lands as Wilderness. We Americans, as the joint owners of Wilderness, socially value it most for its contributions to cleaner water and air.
- Additional values held by large percentages of Americans include protection of wildlife habitat; protection of rare, threatened and endangered species; and protection so that future generations will also have wild lands.
- Economic benefits from Wilderness are of two types—on-site recreation use and passive off-site appreciation. As measured by economists, on-site recreation use is valued at \$464 million annually. This is the estimated direct benefit to recreation users of Wilderness. Off-site passive appreciation (for options to use in the future,

for future generations of others to use, and for knowing simply that Wilderness exists) is valued by society at an estimated \$3.34 billion annually. Passive values are about 7 times the value of on-site recreation use.

- In addition to social and economic values, Wilderness also has ecological and intrinsic value. The key indicator of ecological value of Wilderness is its naturalness, which is the necessary condition for support of native life forms. Intrinsic value can exist whether we as humans realize it or not—it is the inherent value of wild lands to function autonomously in ways of their own “choosing”.
- By statute and by social choice, Wilderness is a national resource deserving of the voice of its national owners (all Americans) when options regarding its future are being considered. While local interests and recreational use interests are important in considering options, knowing the national interests (values) of the American people are vital in decision making.

I look forward to staying in touch with you as the Forums and core group work toward a report for the Regional Forester. The presentation I offered at the Forum Tuesday can be found under “Presentations” at [www.srs.fs.fed.us/trends](http://www.srs.fs.fed.us/trends). Please let me and my co-authors know if we can help further.

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