

CoNPS Conservation Committee 2019 Update

Our Committee had a very productive year again this year.

CoNPS Comment Letters Written:

- April 5, 2019: Re: Amendments of the Clean Water Act to the EPA strongly opposing the removal of wetlands, fens, small headwater streams and ephemeral/intermittent drainage waters from EPA regulations.
- May 2, 2019: Taylor Park Logging Proposal – Vegetation Management Project.
- July 2, 2019: Jack's Gulch Fuels Management Plan in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District. The Forest Service plans to thin the forest in order to reduce the build-up of fuels that generate forest fires.
- August 7, 2019: DRAFT EIS for Domestic Sheep Grazing Renewals, BLM Gunnison Office, asking the BLM to consider more than just their BLM Sensitive plant species in this EIS analysis. There are known occurrences of rare plant Species of Local Concern in this project area.
- August 9, 2019: NEPA Proposed Rule Comments - Forest Service's proposed revisions to regulations, 36 CFR 220, for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).
- November 19, 2019: Comment to Colorado Parks & Wildlife regarding the Eldorado State Park Visitor Use Management Plan to ensure protection of *Carex spengelii* which may occur within the boundaries of the Park.

Note: CoNPS comment letters are signed and written by Bayard Ewing, Conservation Committee Chair. In some cases, letters were authored and/or edited by members of the Committee, including Gay Austin, Brad Klafehn, and others, and then approved and signed by Bayard Ewing.

CoNPS signs on to other agency comment letters:

- January 29, 2019: Dept of Interior's (DOI) Proposed Freedom of Information Act Regulations Proposed Rule, which, if adopted, would severely undermine government transparency, violate FOIA, and limit important public rights guaranteed by statute.
- April 25, 2019: Support of the use of native plants in NRCS Revegetation Projects. Letter was signed by 87 organizations expressing support for incorporating stronger guidance on the preferential use of diverse native plants to support wildlife, pollinators and soil health in conservation practice standards.
- June 20, 2019: Brown's Canyon National Monument Resource Management Plan
- July 29, 2019: The CoNPS Conservation Committee signed on to comments made by the High Country Conservation Advocates and other conservation organizations regarding the Grand Mesa and Uncompahgre Revised Forest Plan. The Committee

also submitted our own comments which had a somewhat different focus and can be found on a subsequent post.

- August 25, 2019: Letter from The Wilderness Society on Proposed Rule, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance (84 Fed. Reg. 27,544, June 13, 2019)
- November 18, 2019: Powderhorn Fuels Management Project. Letter written by Matt Reed, Public Lands Director with High Country Conservation Advocates and signed by fourteen other Colorado conservation organizations.

Additional Advocacy by our Committee Members:

- Colorado Parks & Wildlife Roundtable – CoNPS is represented at the Roundtable meetings by Brad Klafehn and Kristen Delay
- Committee members commented as individuals on the BLM March and June 2019 oil/gas lease sales, using rare plant information from Mo Ewing.

Conservation Corner articles for *Aquilegia* 2019:

- *Conservation Corner: Pawnee National Grasslands: An Important Conservation Area for Colorado's Biodiversity* by Crystal Cogar – Winter 2019
- *A Tale of Two Wildflowers*, by Suzanne Dingwell – Spring 2019
- *A Case for Preserving a River's Natural Character*, by Maggie Gaddis – Summer 2019
- *Colorado takes the lead in protecting alpine plants in North America*, by Jennifer Neale – Fall 2019

Chapter Advocacy:

- Northern Chapter: River's Edge Natural Area Demonstration Gardens in Loveland are installed. Plants and supplies were purchased through a Larimer County grant applied for by Kathy Maher, Project Lead. The two gardens are thriving, signage will be installed in April and will be an educational highlight in this high-profile natural area. The Northern Chapter also is monitoring via online or in person several local advisory boards for future advocacy issues.

To join the CoNPS Conservation Committee, please email Mo Ewing, Conservation Committee Chair, at bayardewing@gmail.com. This update is provided by Linda Smith, Conservation Committee Co-Chair.