

The Honorable Bill Owens  
Governor, State of Colorado  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, CO 80203-1792

July 14, 2003

**Re: Protecting America's Public Lands in Colorado from Unnecessary and Damaging Road Construction.**

Dear Governor Owens:

We the undersigned businesses are concerned about your Administration's participation in a non-public process with the Department of the Interior that could lead to the construction of many new, unnecessary and damaging roads through National Parks, National Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges and wilderness lands in Colorado. We strongly support the protection of these important public resources and respectfully request that any resolution of ancient right-of-way claims be done in a manner that preserves these national treasures. We also urge that the public be included in the designing of a valid process for addressing any right-of-way claims on lands in Colorado owned by all Americans.

Scenic open spaces are one of the principle reasons that people and businesses flock to Colorado. Simply stated, the quality of life in our State is unsurpassed in the country. Whether located on the Front Range, with the Indian Peaks and Rocky Mountain National Park a short distance away, or in the more remote parts of the State near Dinosaur National Monument or the South San Juans Wilderness, business owners share a common knowledge: Colorado's spectacular protected landscapes bring millions of visitors every year, many of whom are our customers as well. Colorado's hunting and fishing industry alone generated \$2 billion in economic activity in 2001; when you add in hikers, boaters, campers, mountain bikers and other recreationists, the annual economic contribution generated by Colorado's public lands is immense. Open space in our State is already easily accessed; we don't need to turn cattle trails and fading jeep tracks into more roads. If counties have legitimate outstanding right-of-way claims, we urge that such claims be resolved expeditiously under the process provided by existing, modern laws that take environmental impacts into account.

According to an April 2<sup>nd</sup> letter from you and a May 15<sup>th</sup> letter sent by Department of Natural Resources Director Greg Walcher to Department of Interior (DOI) Secretary Gale Norton, the State of Colorado has initiated closed discussions with DOI to "resolve" issues related to claims to rights-of-way under Revised Statute (R.S.) 2477. This law was written over 100 years ago, and was intended for circumstances very different than the one we face today. We believe the approach suggested in Director Walcher's letter, which would allow non-constructed routes such as hiking trails and cow paths to be turned into highways across protected wildlands, represents an unbalanced approach to this issue. Such a policy could lead to tremendous destruction of Colorado's open spaces—the places that patrons of businesses like ours treasure for recreation and solitude. The image of bulldozers in our National Parks is not one that is likely to attract visitors, including our patrons.

America's spectacular public lands in Colorado—our National Parks and Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges and wilderness lands—are truly one of our greatest assets. Our open spaces are not only of vital economic importance, they also provide benefits like clean water, big game habitat, and places for people to retreat from their hectic everyday lives. We therefore respectfully urge you to ensure that Colorado's public lands stay protected, and that you embrace a more balanced approach to dealing with the issues of current and historic access to public lands. We also request that any discussions about this issue be made open to the public.

Sincerely,

Adobe Creek Animal Clinic, Toni and Don Moore, DVM  
Over the Edge Sports, Ltd., Troy Rarick  
Summit Canyon Mountaineering (Grand Junction), Steve Davis  
Colorado Java House, Lori Springer  
Sundrop Grocery, Robert Weiss  
Western Anglers, Jerry Schaeffer  
Planet Earth & Four Directions Gallery, Carol Lowry  
Lindauer Architects, Inc., Leland Lindauer  
Jim Majors Law Office, Jim Majors, Atty.  
Claffey Ecological Consulting, Michael P. Claffey  
Chamberlin Architects, Edward Chamberlin  
Southwest Adventures, Clay Patton  
Backdoor Sports, Ltd., Pete Van DeCarr  
One Stop Ski Shop Ltd., John M. Kole  
Straightline Outdoor Sports, Brett Lee  
Steamboat Fishing Co., Jeff Ruff  
Off the Beaten Path Bookstore, Leslie Ryan  
Epilogue Book Co., Whitney Kaaz  
White Hart Gallery, C. Arnies  
SpringSips Internet, Stephanie Reinike  
The Homesteader, Steve Kennedy  
Bamboo Market Health Foods, Anne Halloran  
Uprisings Bakery & Deli, Bryan Idzahl  
Lyon Drug, Nancy Clapsaddle  
The Steamboat Local, Paul Anderson  
Lovejoy Graphics, Leslie Lovejoy  
Mogils on the Mountain, Jay Mogil  
Oak Creek Bodyworks, Jonathan Wheby