

**SIERRA
CLUB**

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TIMBERLINES

PIKES PEAK GROUP

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

SUMMER 2006

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Alert: "Highway Robbery" - RS 2477 and Colorado's Natural Areas

Adapted from a Colorado Environmental Coalition Alert

MEETINGS

GENERAL MEETINGS

General Meetings are usually held at the Colorado Division of Wildlife, 4255 Sinton Road in Colorado Springs, approximately one block south of Garden of the Gods Road on the east side of I-25. Use the rear entrance to the building. For directions, call Jim Lockhart at 385-0045.

Tuesday, April 11 7pm Browns Canyon Wilderness

Congressman Joel Hefley is working for wilderness designation of Browns Canyon, near the Arkansas River north of Salida. The Friends of Browns Canyon Wilderness slide show will transport you to the heart of these scenic, yet little-known wild lands.

No General Meeting in May

Our General Meeting program is being replaced by the film and silent auction on May 23. Join the Pikes Peak Group on Tuesday May 23, 6:00 PM at All Souls Unitarian Church, 730 N. Tejon Street, as we discover "Ansel Adams," a documentary (details in Adams box page 2). Suggested donation is \$5 - the doors open at 6:00 P.M. for a silent auction, the film begins at approximately 7:00 PM.

No General Meeting in June

Conservation and ExCom Meetings

Tuesday, April 18 6:30 pm
Tuesday, May 16 6:30 pm
Tuesday, June 20 6:30 pm
These are our monthly "business" meetings, held at

(Continued on page 2)

Outgoing Interior Secretary Gale Norton, two weeks before she leaves her post, pushed another land-giveaway policy out the door that could result in destructive and unnecessary road development and off-road vehicle use in Colorado's national parks, wildlife refuges, monuments, and other special public land treasures. The Bush-designated replacement Secretary, Dirk Kempthorne, is unlikely to change this direction.

Using the Civil War-era law known as "RS 2477" (Revised Statue 2477, enacted by Congress in 1866), the new policy would make it easier for states or counties to promote highway construction on public lands — even though the claims generally have little connection to legitimate transportation needs, and would undermine protection for our nation's public lands and wildlife.

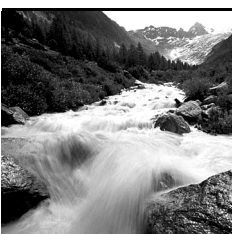
Removing federal protections for these special public land treasures could have major consequences in Colorado and throughout the West. National parks, wildlife refuges, national monu-

ments, wilderness areas, conservation areas, and other sensitive federal lands could have more road development and damaging off-road vehicle use under the new proposal.

One Example: Moffat County Moffat County Colorado, in the far northwestern corner of the state, is home to the Dinosaur National Monument (shared with Utah), the Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge, and approximately 300,000 acres of wilderness-quality BLM land including the Vermillion Basin. In 2003, Moffat County officials used R.S. 2477 to claim over 2,000 miles of "highways" across these and other treasured lands and habitat within the county. In total, Moffat County has claimed over 240 miles in Dinosaur National Monument, 53 miles in the Browns Park National Wildlife Refuge, and 230 miles in the Vermillion Basin.

For more information and background, visit:

www.ourcolorado.org/alerts/032406_alert_rs2477.htm



HELP WANTED — Web of Water Volunteers

This summer and fall, Pikes Peak Group is implementing a campaign, Web of Water, in which volunteers inventory and check water quality on roadless public lands where motorized vehicles cross streams and wetlands. Training and interesting outings included. A volunteer coordinator is especially needed. For details, contact Jim Lockhart at 719-385-0045 or John Stansfield at 303-660-5849.

Pueblo and Sierra Club Suits over Fountain Creek Consolidated

U.S. District Judge Walker Miller, in an order Friday, combined the lawsuits of Pueblo County District Attorney Bill Thiebaut and of the Sierra Club, as had been anticipated.

Colorado Springs City Council members gave utility officials the go-ahead Tuesday to build an inflatable dam on Fountain Creek near the Sand Creek lift station by Spring, 2007. The hope is that it will halt the raw sewage spills into Fountain Creek which prompted the two lawsuits. Although actual drawings of the dam do not yet exist, it is planned as the largest-ever version of the smaller emergency inflatable dams used to contain chemical spills and control irrigation water. If there is a raw sewage spill, the dam will be inflated, the polluted creek water will be diverted to a holding pond (not yet built) and thence to a treatment plant, while water from a clean reserve pond will be released into the creek to satisfy the water rights of downstream users.

The dam will cost \$10.5 million, which will be covered by raising wastewater bills by about 35 cents a month next year. Since customers cited "environmental concerns" as their most major utility-related concern, the utility officials figure the ratepayers won't kick too much about the charges.

"It shows our commitment to keeping Fountain Creek as clean as possible," Mayor Lionel Rivera said.