

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

For Release:
Tuesday, March 2, 1999

Contact: Sean Conway
(202) 224-6207
Wil Bos
(202) 225-4761
Adrian Plesha
(202) 225-4676

ALLARD, McINNIS & SCHAFFER
INTRODUCE SPANISH PEAKS WILDERNESS BILL

Washington, D.C. — U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO), Third District Representative Scott McInnis (R-CO), and Fourth District Representative Bob Schaffer (R-CO) today introduced legislation which would give wilderness protection to the Spanish Peaks located in south-central Colorado. The twin-peaks rest equally between McInnis and Schaffer's districts in Huerfano and Las Animas Counties.

“Today, we are introducing a wilderness bill that enjoys the support of the environmental community, local elected officials and the citizens of Huerfano and Las Animas County,” Allard said. “This legislation is an example of what can be accomplished when members of the Colorado congressional delegation work together. I am very proud to have been a part of the team effort that has produced the first consensus wilderness bill in Colorado since 1993.”

The Allard-McInnis-Schaffer bill would designate approximately 18,000 acres as wilderness in and around the Spanish Peaks near La Veta, Colorado. The legislation includes a compromise worked out by the three law makers to protect water rights within the wilderness area. Current grazing now allowed in the Spanish Peaks by local ranchers would continue. In addition the bill ensures continued access along a four-wheel drive road traditionally used by area residents for several generations. The bill is a slightly modified version of legislation introduced last year by Representative McInnis.

“The effort has been underway for 20 years now to give protection to these peaks and surrounding lands,” said McInnis. “I am hopeful that this year we can complete what was begun by U.S. Senator Armstrong so many years ago. My family came to the La Veta area in the early 1800's so I am very familiar with this area and the special beauty that it contains. The Spanish Peaks are truly worthy of a wilderness area designation so that we can preserve these magnificent peaks for all time.”

“Through careful compromise and with the active involvement and support of the local community and the delegation, I'm pleased to join my colleagues in designating the Spanish Peaks Wilderness,” Schaffer said. “The Forest Service has assured me the wilderness designation will have no impact on adjoining private lands and water rights. This is the right way to approach issues related to resource development and wilderness designation.”

The East and West Spanish Peaks, 13,626 and 12,683 feet high, are visible from 75 miles away. The peaks and surrounding area were added to the National Registry of Natural Landmarks in 1977. The Spanish Peaks were first recommended for wilderness by the Forest Service in 1979. After years of study, a number of public meetings, and several Forest Service in-holding purchases of old mining claims, Senator Allard and Representatives McInnis and Schaffer began working on legislation late last year to place the peaks in wilderness protection.

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