

**Opening Statement of Congressman Scott Tipton**  
**Thursday, March 6, 2013**  
**Before the House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation**  
**Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1839, the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013**

Thank you Chairman Bishop for convening today's hearing and including H.R. 1839, the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013. I want to welcome Scott Jones for representing the Colorado Snowmobile Association and thank you for your testimony today on this important legislation. I also want to thank others that traveled from Colorado to be here with us today, Ed Zink who has worked tirelessly on this issue, La Plata County Commissioner Gwen Lachelt, and San Juan County Commissioner Scott Fetchenhier, Jeff Widen, as well as representatives from Trout Unlimited.

The Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013 would generate a long-term management plan for the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Area and the Hermosa Creek Special Management Area. Hermosa Creek is one of Colorado's most beautiful scenic areas, and has long been treasured by the local community and by countless visitors who have explored all that the region has to offer.

When it comes to land use designations, I support a balanced approach that includes respecting the environment that we all deeply value, while making the best use of our natural resources. Recreation, preservation, access and job creation are all important aspects of the multiple use management for which these lands are truly intended.

I'm a firm believer that land use designations should be driven with a balance of local initiative and consideration that public lands belong to all Americans. Such is the case with Hermosa Creek Watershed, where I have worked with local citizens and groups and Senator Michael Bennet to put forward a plan to permanently protect the area while maintaining access and multiple use of the land.

The Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act has truly been a locally-driven effort and has broad community support. Because the bill has been carefully crafted to preserve the Hermosa Creek watershed and the multiple use recreation opportunities it provides, it has received the endorsement of numerous local stakeholders including snowmobilers, anglers, hunters, mountain bikers and other outdoor enthusiasts, elected officials, grazing permit holders, miners, water users and Southwest Colorado residents.

Under the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013, much of the land will remain open to historic uses, including mountain biking, motorized recreation, hunting, fishing and selective timber harvesting. Grazing will be permitted in the entire watershed. This legislation ensures that areas currently open to snowmobiling on Molas Pass will remain open for future use. This will benefit outdoor recreation enthusiasts and continue to provide an important source of economic activity for the area. If this bill is not passed, then snowmobiling will cease in this region following the end of this winter season.

This act also contains important provisions that allow for active land management in areas designated by the bill as necessary to control wildfires, insect infestations and disease outbreaks.

The Region 9 Economic Development District of Southwest Colorado strongly supports this legislation and believes it will retain and create better jobs, foster economic growth and sustainability for an area where tourism and recreation is absolutely critical, and assist with improving the overall quality of life in Southwestern Colorado.

In addition to District 9, the bill is supported by the City of Durango, the La Plata County Commission, the Southwestern Water Conservation District, the San Juan County Commission, the Colorado Snowmobilers Association, Jo Grant Mining Company, Inc., and many others. At this time, I would like to submit for the record the letters in support of this legislation I have received.

The diversity of these stakeholders speaks to the importance of the Hermosa Creek Watershed to the region and the community consensus behind this effort. Together we can preserve this special place for future generations.

I thank you again Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing, and I yield back.