

Testimony of Congressman Scott Tipton
Wednesday, November 20, 2013
Before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on S.841, the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013

Thank you Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso for convening today's hearing and including S.841, the Hermosa Creek Watershed Protection Act of 2013. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today on this important bill. I am pleased to have worked with Senator Bennet on this bipartisan effort and to be the sponsor of H.R. 1839, the House companion of this legislation.

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. This legislation has truly been locally-driven 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 2013/2014 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 this act 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.

I have requested a similar legislative hearing on this act in the House and am committed to working with Senator Bennett and community stakeholders to address any outstanding issues so that we can move this bill forward and protect the watershed and recreation opportunities in the Hermosa Creek area. Together we can preserve this special place for future generations. Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back.