



Jeffrey Woodruff <jeffrey.woodruff@pitkincounty.com>

LWCF and Snowmass Falls Ranch

2 messages

Jeffrey Woodruff <jeffrey.woodruff@pitkincounty.com>
Bcc: Jeffrey Woodruff <jeffrey.woodruff@pitkincounty.com>

Tue, Jun 10, 2025 at 3:46 PM

Congressman Hurd,

The watersheds of Snowmass and Capitol Creek of the beauty and awe of Pitkin County. Horseback riders, outfitters and hikers frequent the trails. Our creeks are home to the best fly fishing in our headwaters. Snowmass and Capitol Creek are critical trailheads for locals and visitors to the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness.

You witnessed some of the beauty of the valley on the drive to the Walis' residence at Lazy O Ranch. Lazy O Ranch is home to livestock and several teams of horses and surrounded by agricultural leases. Next door to Lazy O Ranch is John Denver's sanctuary, Windstar- over 900 acres of wildlife and riparian habitat conserved in perpetuity. The valley is fortunate to have families that are stewards of the land, working ranches for hay and cattle, ensuring the beauty of the Snowmass and Capitol Creek Valley.

This context is to say, we love our valley, our land and our headwater streams. We have been working hard with the USDA on a critical Land Acquisition Project along Snowmass Creek. As you may know, the Land and Water Conservation Fund ("LWCF") was permanently set aside for land acquisition projects in the Great American Outdoors Act, which President Trump signed into law on August 6, 2020. Encouraged by this landmark legislation, last year Pitkin County purchased the Snowmass Falls Ranch to assist the White River National Forest ("WRNF") with its long held goal of acquiring this 650 acre inholding. The property is largely within the Maroon Bells – Snowmass Wilderness. Pitkin County borrowed funds from Great Outdoors Colorado to make this happen. Our interim acquisition allowed the WRNF to submit a LWCF request for this property, which ranked #1 in region 2. Two highly popular trails cross the property heading into the Wilderness and it will add amazing hunting and fishing opportunities in the meadows and creek. The project is supported by a broad spectrum of organizations. We had discussed doing a site visit during your meeting with us in Aspen.

Last Friday, we learned that the fiscal year 2026 President's Budget Request proposes just one land acquisition project (the top-ranked project) and the remainder of the LWCF funds for deferred maintenance. The budget request does, however, provide a "supplemental" list of land acquisition projects. Snowmass Falls is ranked #5 (phase 1) and #17 (phase 2) on the Administrations supplemental list.

We are concerned about the re-direction of LWCF funds towards maintenance, and to ask you

to urge the Chair of the House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies, Representative Mike Simpson, to allocate LWCF to the purpose for which it is intended, land acquisition. If this were done, the Snowmass Falls project would be fully funded.

We had hoped to schedule a walk or hike (or drive) of Snowmass Falls Ranch before the budget process got moving and would welcome you this Saturday, June 14, before the Gypsum dinner? We would also be happy to join you in your Grand Junction office this Thursday, 12 June 2025 to answer any questions. The Subcommittee's mark-up is on June 23.

This month we celebrate Great Outdoors Month. LWCF funding to incorporate the Snowmass Falls Ranch into the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness would protect the habitat and riparian corridors and pass on the stewardship of this spectacular landscape. Sweeping the LWCF funds to maintenance is inconsistent with the language of the law.

We value your support in ensuring that LWCF dollars go to land acquisition, and, more specifically, to acquiring the 650 Acre Snowmass Falls Ranch as provided and ranked in the Supplemental List attached to the fiscal year 2026 President's Budget Request.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Woodruff
Snowmass and Snowmass Village, District 4
Pitkin County commissioner

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To: Jeffrey Woodruff <jeffrey.woodruff@pitkincounty.com>

Tue, Jun 10, 2025 at 3:50 PM

Thank you

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“Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.” Ben Franklin

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