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Groups Unite Over Boulder-White Clouds Monument Plan

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A coalition of conservation and mountain bike groups today unveiled a ground-breaking proposal to maintain high-quality wilderness and protect world-class mountain bike access in central Idaho's Boulder-White Cloud Mountains.



The agreement is part of an ongoing process to hammer out local recommendations that could guide a possible National Monument designation in the absence of action at the Congressional level.

Representatives of the Idaho Conservation League, Wood River Bicycle Coalition, International Mountain Bicycling Association and The Wilderness Society say they worked together for months before hitting a balance between land protection in areas long recommended for wilderness and mountain biking opportunities that have become a significant local attraction and economic driver.

"The Boulder-White Clouds is a spectacular landscape, and its valued for many reasons," said Brett Stevenson, executive director of the Wood River Bicycle Coalition in Hailey. "It warrants National Monument protection and that protection can and should balance wilderness character with mountain biking and other forms of low-impact recreation that are compatible with conservation objectives."

"The Boulder-White Clouds have extraordinary wilderness values and world-class recreational access," said Rick Johnson, executive director of the Idaho Conservation League. "We are working together to protect both."

The agreement provides concrete recommendations for how the administration could protect the Boulder-White Clouds as a National Monument with a primary goal being the continued use by the public "in largely the same way and in the same condition that it is today."

It specifically recommends a mix of wilderness-grade protections for important watersheds in high alpine lake basins and the high peaks of the White Clouds Mountains alongside formalized travel corridors which preserve access for mountain biking in places like Castle Divide and Ants Basin.

The significance of conservation and mountain bike groups working together in the Boulder-White Clouds is ground-breaking according to IMBA Executive Director Michael Van Abel and Craig Gehrke, Idaho Director of The Wilderness Society.

"I have watched for a decade with both trepidation and great hope, as our collective communities navigated a challenging yet important task of finding common ground on how to manage this iconic landscape," said Van Abel. "I am pleased to see that in today's often divisive atmosphere, we have reached an agreeable solution and can stand united on what the future of the Boulder-White Clouds should look like."

"This agreement represents one of the best things about conservation in Idaho – people with diverse views rolling up their sleeves to work together," agreed Gehrke who also noted there is still more work to do.

"We will continue to seek out recommendations and collaborate to ensure at the end of the day Idahoans are the ones guiding a potential Monument designation," he said. "This agreement to protect wilderness values as well as existing uses is an important step forward in this process."

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