

Dear House Agriculture, Livestock and Water Committee,

I am writing to provide written testimony on SB-22-69. I am a wildlife biologist with Rocky Mountain Wild, a non-profit wildlife conservation organization in Colorado. We represent thousands of supporters in Colorado.

We use Colorado Parks and Wildlife data on locations of plant species, plant habitats, and individual animals or groups of animals regularly in our research and conservation work. We regularly use this type of data to: 1) inform collaborative processes to find the best way to balance plant and wildlife conservation with other uses, 2) to do wildlife research in collaboration with state and federal agencies and universities, 3) to design and implement community science programs, 4) to identify opportunities for and plan restoration projects.

Examples of current projects that use this type of data include:

- Designing a study to assess the influence of human recreation on the abundance and density of elk and to determine whether current seasonal closures reduce the influence of human recreation on elk. This research is being done in collaboration with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the White River National Forest.

Designing a statewide community science project aimed at monitoring bat populations in Colorado, in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Natural Heritage Program, and U.S. Geological Survey.

Collaborating with San Miguel County, Montezuma Land Conservancy, and a variety of stakeholders who are part of the San Miguel Basin Gunnison sage-grouse working group to develop a GIS based tool to identify and prioritize restoration and other voluntary conservation actions for Gunnison sage-grouse.

In addition, we run several community science research projects that generate substantial amounts of data on locations of individual animals and groups of animals that we share with Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Hundreds of volunteers contribute their time to collecting data. We share that data with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to inform wildlife management and conservation. We want that data to be available to researchers, organizations and collaborative partnerships outside of CPW who will use it to inform wildlife research, monitoring and conservation efforts. We are unlikely to share the data with Colorado Parks and Wildlife if it is not available to the public for these purposes.

We ask that you amend the bill to exempt data requests that will be used for the public interest. We recognize that the bill currently allows release of information if it is 'in the public interest', but requires going to court to establish that. This will cause organizations like RMW who are using this data in collaborative processes that inform wildlife conservation efforts, to go to court several times a year to obtain the data. We would likely need to file several lawsuits per year to obtain data we need to do our work. This will not only waste our time, it is likely to result in many lawsuits each year that the state must deal with, wasting limited taxpayer money and resources.

We feel that you can write an amendment that is sufficiently precise make the data available to individuals and groups who are using the data for a legitimate public interest.

Thank you for your time,

Megan Mueller

Senior Conservation Biologist

Rocky Mountain Wild