

June 26, 2025



Sen. Michael Bennet
United States Senate

Sen. John Hickenlooper
United States Senate

Sen. Mike Lee
Chair, Energy & Natural Resources

Reconciliation Bill too Risky - Pro Public Lands Advocacy

Dear Senators Bennet, Hickenlooper & Lee,

The City of Aspen is surrounded by 88% public lands of which our economy is dependent upon and is central to the culture, lifestyle, and quality of life for residents and tourists alike. These adjacent public lands provide essential resources, landscapes, and recreation opportunities which support the health and sustainability of our community, economy, and ecosystems.

This land is not suitable for residential development, should not be sold for the development of housing, and 5% of each sale will not assist us in our local needs associated with affordable housing.

For the last 50 years, the protection and management of these natural places has been key to maintaining our tourism-based economies. We deeply value these public lands for their recreational, economic, cultural, and spiritual significance and further recognize that these lands are accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or gender.

Whether it be for skiing, hunting, family camping trips, grazing lands for agricultural operations, habitats for wildlife, ranching, tourism, and opportunities for outdoor recreation, federal management of these public lands ensures that resources continue to be for the benefit of all Americans, addressing complex challenges such as wildfire management, watershed protection, and wildlife conservation.

The proposed reconciliation bill is contrary to the concept of public lands and would undermine existing laws and policies by enabling the sale of federal public land without proper input. Parcels sold for development of housing necessitate criteria for affordability provisions and the proposed language is vague.

A federal legislative process already exists for the transfer of federal public land for community housing through the 2024 Flexible Partnership Act, and the reconciliation bill overrides that public and legislative process.

We request that you fight to safeguard the public lands that are so critical to our Western U.S. economies and oppose the sale, transfer or dispose of public lands currently in the Senate reconciliation bill.

A blue ink signature of Rachael E. Richards.

Rachael E. Richards, Mayor