



# Protecting National Parks from Mining Threats – Colorado

## Mining on Public Lands and National Parks in Colorado

Celebrated for their scenic beauty, abundant wildlife and cultural resources, Colorado's national parks—from Rocky Mountain to Mesa Verde—are places to be protected and stewarded for future generations to experience. This is why national parks and newly designated conservation areas, such as Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument, prohibit *new* mining claims within their boundaries. Yet, there are still over **70 places** where mining activities remain possible inside of a national park or monument in Colorado.



Unlike every other public land use, the specific location of mining claims is largely left up to the claim holder's choice. This drastically limits the ability of Colorado's public land managers, like the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service, to protect high value conservation areas. **It is also why 65-percent of mining claims in Colorado (over 7,200 total claims) are located within 30 miles of national parks and monuments in Colorado.**

While a mine claim does not guarantee an active mine will develop, it is an exceedingly easy first step; a mine claim has a nominal annual fee and few restrictions considering potential harm to surrounding landscapes or communities. As a result, the claim system directly threatens clean air and water, wildlife habitat, connectivity and cultural resources conserved by parks and monuments. In 2023, **7.2 million** people visited Colorado's national park sites, contributing **\$1.3 billion** in economic benefit to the state. Meanwhile, mine claim holders paid less than \$10 per acre to possess public lands with a mine claim. Commonsense changes to the mining laws are essential to protect Colorado's national parks, monuments and local economies.

## IMPROVING THE CLAIM SYSTEM TO PROTECT PARKS

National parks are places that bring us together even in divided times. Poll after poll shows Americans overwhelmingly support protecting national parks on both sides of the political aisle, united behind clean air, clean water, and healthy wildlife. NPCA is committed to securing bipartisan victories for the parks with commonsense mining law reform and mobilizing park supporters to protect these cherished landscapes. Now, more than ever, our parks need your help.

**For more information:**

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## SPOTLIGHT

### Mesa Verde National Park

Our nation's first national park established to preserve the deep Indigenous history of the Colorado Plateau, exploratory mining and an abundance of abandoned mine lands exist directly upstream from Mesa Verde National Park in the nearby La Plata Mountains.

#### COLORADO'S MINING CLAIMS BY THE NUMBERS

COLORADO'S MINING CLAIMS BY THE NUMBERS	
CLAIMS LOCATED ON NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS	492,178
CLAIMS LOCATED ON NATIONAL PUBLIC LANDS IN COLORADO	11,374
CLAIMS WITHIN 30 MILES OF COLORADO'S NATIONAL PARKS & MONUMENTS	7,288
CLAIMS INSIDE COLORADO'S NATIONAL PARKS & MONUMENTS	72