

HUNTING AND FISHING IN COLUMBINE HONDO

Hunters and anglers share a deep and abiding connection to the land. For more than 100 years they have been a leading part of the movement to conserve wildlife and wildlands. Aldo Leopold, the author of *A Sand County Almanac*, America's first full-time professor of wildlife management, and former Carson National Forest Supervisor, came to see the value of protecting wilderness through his experiences as a hunter. Leopold recognized that good hunting depended on preserving large tracts of wilderness. Today we use the Wilderness Act of 1964 to protect some of America's best remaining wildlife habitat and fishing streams.

Hunting and Fishing: At Home in Columbine Hondo

Hunting and fishing have always been among the most popular forms of recreation in wilderness. Except for wilderness areas inside national parks, which generally prohibit hunting already, wilderness designation itself places no new restrictions or quotas on hunting or fishing, and these activities remain under the oversight of state fish and wildlife agencies.

Wilderness Designation Protects this Prime Habitat for Fish and Wildlife

Columbine Hondo provides some of the best habitat in Northern New Mexico for fish and game. Designating it would safeguard coldwater fisheries and a fragile high alpine ecosystem, including important seasonal habitat for wildlife and migratory birds. Intact habitat in wilderness areas means healthy populations of fish and wildlife for hunters and anglers, both in wilderness areas and in nearby and downstream non-wilderness areas. For example:

- Road building and motorized use in Columbine Hondo would decrease big game habitat and damage streams. Wilderness designation would preserve this large, contiguous land area that support healthy numbers of big game, including elk, deer, and antelope.
- Columbine Hondo is home to many blue-ribbon trout streams that provide critical habitat for species such as westslope, greenback, and Colorado River cutthroat. Wilderness designation would prevent logging and road building that fill streams with silt and destroy fish habitat.
- Wilderness also can help maintain the health of a species. In the Rocky Mountains, for example, the Tubifex worm that hosts the trout-killing whirling disease parasite is often found in degraded waters—but is almost never found in wilderness streams.

Wilderness provides benefits for all New Mexicans, whether they hunt, fish, camp, study birds, hike, boat, take photographs—or simply benefit from the clean air and water produced wilderness areas. Hunters, anglers, and other conservationists should work together to protect our wildlife, wildlands, and common heritage.

Comment [MK1]: Please provide edits on species types here