

Lower Piney

25,790 acres (40.3 square miles)

Setting

The proposed Lower Piney Addition occupies a large portion of the Piney River drainage. This river begins at Piney Lake, north of Vail, and flows into the Colorado River at State Bridge. The north portion of the area is on Piney Ridge, which separates Piney River from Sheephorn Creek. Many wooded tributary drainages dissect the landscape, which ranges in elevation from 7,800 feet on the Piney River to 11,107 feet at Chimney Rock. Spruce/fir forests dominate the hills, with lodgepole pine and aspen in the drainages.



Diverse ecosystem of Lower Piney

What's special about it

Ecology: Lower Piney supports large herds of elk and mule deer, and provides an important corridor between the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area and lower-elevation BLM and state-owned rangelands in the Kremmling area, and a corridor to the northern Gore Range.

Recreation: Use by hunters is quite heavy here in the autumn. Piney River supports an impressive diversity of native plants, and provides wonderful fishing opportunities. It is also eligible for Wild and Scenic River status due to its many remarkable values.

Potential threats

Motor recreation: Off-road motorized use occurs, damaging forest resources.

Logging: Lodgepole pine mortality caused by the mountain pine beetle has resulted in wide-spread calls for salvage logging. Any roads required for any timber treatments would cause soils damage, introduce noxious weeds, cause siltation of streams, usher in greatly expanded human uses and generally destroy roadless area values.

Division of Wildlife habitat qualities, species of significance

Lower Piney has areas of rolling valleys to very steep canyons; vegetation consists of spruce fir, aspen lodgepole pine, mountain shrubs, sagebrush, riparian and grassland meadows. The area supports abundant wildlife: elk, deer, black bear, mountain lion, moose, wild turkey, Colorado River Cutthroat trout, blue grouse, pine martin, snowshoe hare and lynx. The area contains extensive critical winter habitat for elk and deer, winter range, severe winter range, winter concentration areas, and migration corridors. In the summer, the area provides high quality habitat for elk and deer, summer range production areas and migration corridors. Moose colonized the area on their own and use the area as overall range. Colorado River Cutthroat trout are found in Piney River, Lava Creek and Elkhorn Park. The area is significant for its lack of roads and limited (2) system hiking trails. Illegal use by motorcycles and ATV's is moving elk and deer onto private lands early in the hunting season. Due to the limited vehicle access and system trails, the area provides excellent solitude and abundant wildlife.

March 2010

the
Hidden Gems
wilderness proposal

Outreach results

The boundaries of this proposal have been extensively modified to allow continued use of a popular snowmobiling area. See attachments for details.

Continuing discussions

Additional boundary refinements might result from ongoing discussions with recreation user groups and with water supply providers.

Other info

The proposed Lower Piney Addition is the largest of 12 roadless areas that are contiguous with the Eagles Nest Wilderness Area, which together forms a roadless complex of over 168,000 acres (262 square miles).

(See map on following page)

