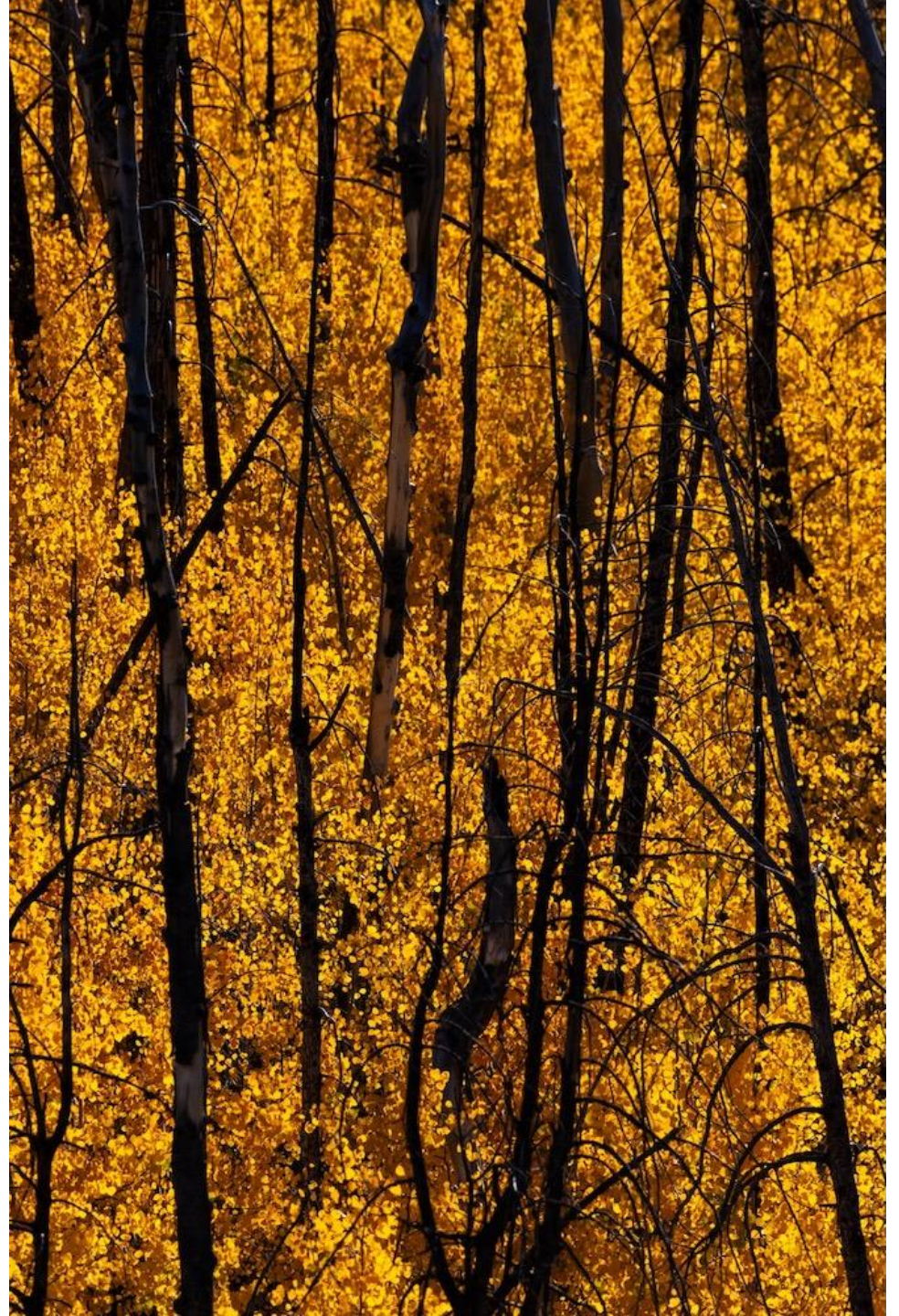


Fall Inferno

Waldo Canyon, Colorado

Each fall, the burned trunks left after the Waldo Canyon Fire seem to be set ablaze again by the young aspen stands. These new forests, no taller than me quite yet, are the foundation for the growing ecosystem. Climate change has and will continue to drastically alter landscapes. I believe that we can work to end and ultimately reverse climate change's global effects, protecting the environments that have yet to be irreversibly disrupted. Sharing the beauty of our natural world through evocative photography is a strong tool, and I will continuously work towards this end through photographs such as this.



Time

Marble, Colorado

This is an up-close shot of a beautiful and enchanting rock. Its life flows throughout itself. You can begin to imagine the heat, ice, elevation, pressure, and erosion this rock experienced over millions of years. Now, it is living in an era of geological history where unpredictable harsh weather and increased erosion from human-induced climate change will dictate its life trajectory. The unprecedented rapid pace at which this is happening will forever make its mark on the Earth. Human impacts are cemented in the geologic record and will be seen by future humans, not just in the Rockies, but everywhere on Earth.





Pink Jacket

Grand Tetons, Wyoming

This photo depicts what it feels to be halfway through the climb of the Grand Teton. If you can see this view, you have reached the saddle, are ready to rest up for the night, knowing you are about to wake at 3 am the next morning to await your conquering of the Grand. The structure to the right in the photo is the "bathroom", with a partition in the middle, two toilet seats on either side, waiting for a wag-bag to be placed on top. Probably one of the most scenic bathroom breaks you could have. Do not be fooled by the beautiful Tetons below however, the wind is practically whipping in your face, begging to pull you down into the range below.



Climate Change Effects

Copper Mountain, Colorado

This photo was taken at Copper Mountain during a long day of skiing. Climate change effects winter in the Rockies arguably more than any season. The plentiful snowfall that we experienced this season will not last. We must take extreme measures to combat carbon emissions if we ever want future generations to experience this euphoric sport. The right to be cold is something that everyone needs to get behind before it's too late.



Tents

Wyoming

This photo serenely depicts the backcountry of Wyoming. Not a soul for miles other than the company you have brought with you, plenty of flies and unstable muddy ground, and a thunderstorm having just passed. The torrential downpour and thunder twenty minutes prior simply open your mind to appreciate the sunset even more greatly. You step away from your camp activities to admire the sun gently setting below the ridge, feeling at peace with the calm after the storm, knowing the night of sleep is about to be one of the best you've had after 20 miles of hiking.

Bright Lights at Night

Colorado Springs, Colorado

A striking contrast between the night sky and the blinding artificial glow, the illuminated cross evokes emotions of safety and perseverance—much like light itself. Yet, as these lights guide our way, they also drown out the silent beauty of the stars. Light pollution is an ever-growing issue, intensifying as cities, like Colorado Springs, continue their relentless expansion. But this is not an isolated problem; it reaches far beyond urban centers, threatening the sanctity of our public lands. Unchecked and excessive lighting disrupts wildlife, impacts human health, and severs our connection to nature.





Desert Arch

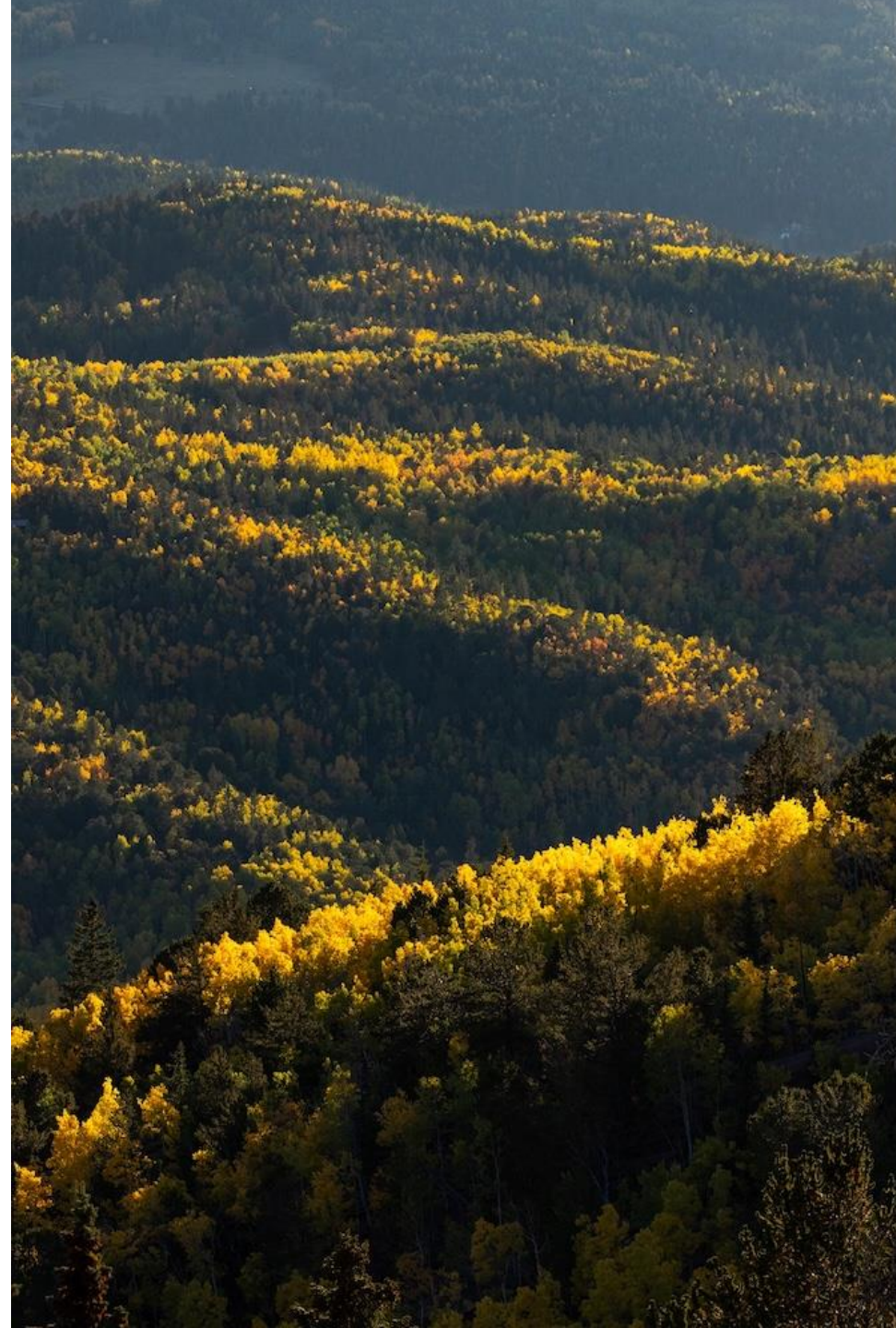
Arches National Park, Utah

This image was taken at Arches National Park on a scorching 103-degree day in July. The hardest part of capturing this photo was avoiding the many visitors walking around and climbing on the rocks, a challenge that highlights the park's increasing popularity. With millions of people visiting each year, Arches faces growing conservation concerns, including the effects of light pollution from nearby Moab. Despite hotter and hotter temperatures, the number of people who visit Arches each year has continued to rise with the line to enter the park stretching out nearly to the road. The high summer temperatures also emphasize the effects of climate change, as rising heat and prolonged droughts threaten the park's natural features and wildlife. This image not only showcases the park's breathtaking scenery but also serves as a reflection on the balance between accessibility and preservation in our national parks.

Waves

Pancake Rocks, Colorado

Coniferous forests dappled with golden aspen stands, illuminated by the setting sun – little fills me with more awe and appreciation for our world. Curiosity is always weaved within these emotions, and it's through curiosity that I understand the importance of protecting our environment. Curiosity is a powerful feeling to get the masses to care, and there is no better method to foster curiosity than through art.





Overwhelmed with Admiration

Colorado

This picture represents the Rocky Mountains overwhelming humans with their sublimity and awe-striking energy. On this hike, the stunning outcrops and overlooks we came across forced us to take our lunch break much earlier than we anticipated. This was my first time backpacking; I don't think I had ever been in remote wilderness like this before in my life. I was struck at how beautiful and intricate the ecosystem was. How every turn we took it seemed we entered a different world full of magpies, curious mule deer, towering Douglas firs, golden quaking aspen, and jagged rock formations. When hiking, you witness how beautifully and easily everything seems to be working together. However, all of this is under threat. The future of these ecosystems, including humanity, is determined by how we move forward with conservation. Every part of the ecosystem in the Rockies plays a role and every part deserves our attention and help.

Long Run

Gold Camp Road, Colorado

This photo was taken on Gold Camp Road during a long run. The Conservation of public trails and parks is of particular importance to me. Running is one of the ways I connect with nature, and I want people to be able to enjoy trail running throughout the Rockies-- and American West-- for generations to come. This takes a new level of meaning under this administration with massive cuts and layoffs happening for federal employees in the National Park Service.



Sunrise Climbers

Grand Tetons, Wyoming

This photo captures the essence of the Rockies for me. This scene depicts the climbing of the Grand Teton at around 5 am in the morning. No one else on the mountain, the people down below still blissfully asleep, and the shadow of the Grand casting itself over the plain of Idaho on the other side.





Layers

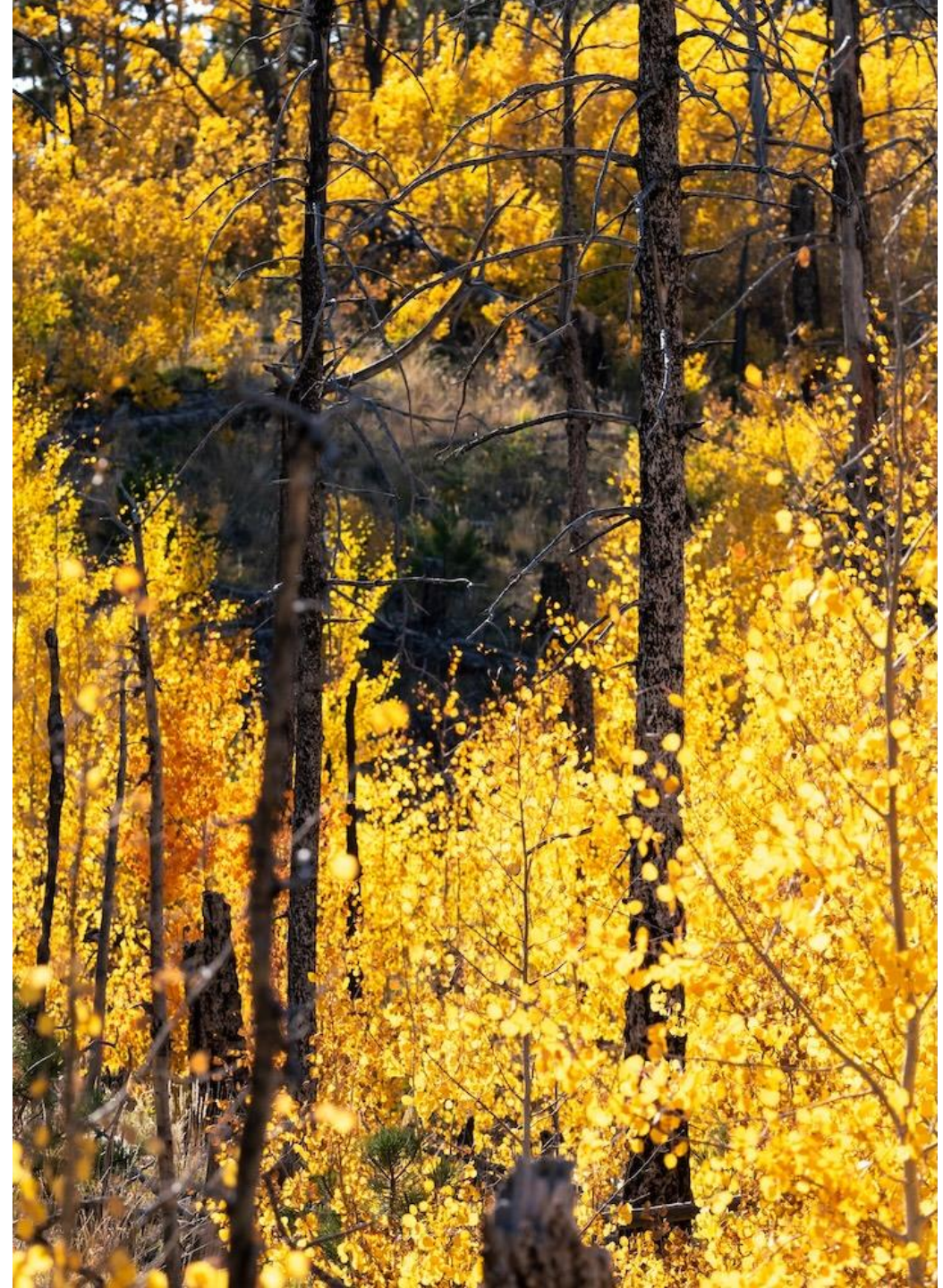
Marble, Colorado

Depending on where you focus, you could get lost in a different serenity: the glass lake, the upright evergreens, the marbling perfection of the shrub and rock on the slope, the naked grey mountain range in the background, or just the space in between. Upon viewing it, I feel the urge to be quiet, as if not to disturb the peace. These spaces are beautiful yet wild, they deserve to stay this way. Climate change threatens these complex and gorgeous alpine ecosystems by increased wildfire and altered weather patterns.

Ablaze

Waldo Canyon, CO

Quaking aspen trees are one of the first species to reclaim burned landscapes. At the time of the blaze, the Waldo Canyon Fire was the most destructive in Colorado's history. Now, more than ten years later, the forest comes ablaze again every fall. Young aspens, no older than ten years, flood the brown mountainsides with golden yellows and deep oranges. It truly looks as if the charred husks of the former forest have caught fire once again. The Waldo Canyon Fire was certainly spurred by climate change, changing the landscape forever – however, that doesn't mean that beauty is absent in the regenerating ecosystem.





Morning's Embrace

The sun illuminates the wilderness and says good morning with its first light. As I took this photo, the cool mountain air filled me with a sense of spirit. Seeing nature in a truly undisturbed setting reminded me of why we protect our land. The forest morning served as a refuge, giving me a rare moment to pause and feel peace before the world awakened.

On The Edge

Stewart Creek, Saguache County, Colorado

The overt impacts of climate change are always the headlines, causing fear and misdirecting the focus away from how the land is actually being impacted. The rising global temperatures and more intense weather patterns lead to underlying changes in the ecosystem that make the once in a lifetime event all the more probable and catastrophic. These subtle changes in the weather are registered by the plants and animals just as much as the community does. However, rather than just a too hot summer, the land suffers. The warmer temperature and drier condition caused an increase in the beetle populations which tore through the pine forests in North America,

changing the once evergreen forests into a motley grey. Only in the stark contrast of the vibrant green valley can the loss of the pine forest be truly felt as a scar across the landscape. As climate change and its impacts on the ecosystem are being recognized, more people are voting that climate change is a serious problem, which is a 22% increase from 2011. There is beauty in both the delicate balance of an ecosystem and in the once in a lifetime event that shapes and sculpts the land. However, we now must realize that the scales are tipping in favor of the uncommon and that the delicate balance of the State of the Rockies is in jeopardy.F





Alpine Reflection

Telluride, Colorado

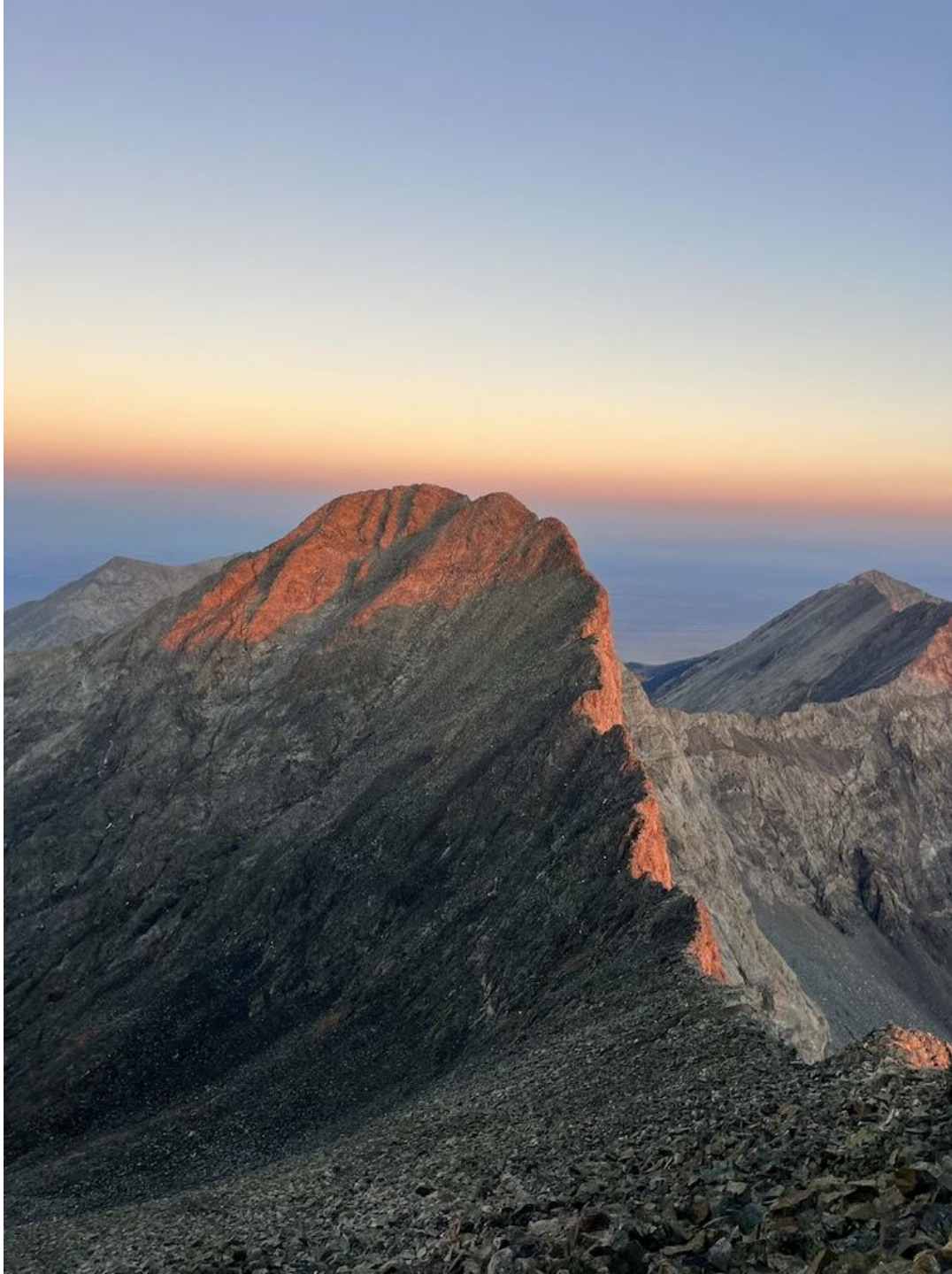
As the sun sets on the San Juan mountains and an alpine lake mirrors rocky peaks, we too are called to reflect on our values. Voters in the west overwhelmingly see water supply and water quality as a pressing issue. Political tensions over water allocation build as climate change and overuse increasingly drain water supplies. When we visit places where wild water resides, we are encouraged not only to take in the beauty, but also to recognize it as a force that gives us life, something deserving of respect and diligent treatment. Simply visiting these places may not be enough; we must use our love for land as momentum to change how we treat our resources.



Bridge Between Me and Nature

Cheyenne State Park,
Colorado

This photo was taken during a hike at Cheyenne State Park. Hiking has bridged the connection between me and Nature. I was born in raised downtown in the concrete metropolis of Chicago and haven't experienced anything more peaceful than long hikes in the mountains. Conserving these spaces for posterity will allow everyone to appreciate nature--something that is arguably needed in an increasingly urban world.



Ellingwood Sunrise

Ellingwood Peak, Colorado

The sunrise drenches Ellingwood Peak in a red-orange glow. Looking over the San Luis Valley and the human life within it, we are encouraged to consider the societal values that unite us: the desire to preserve public lands. The 2025 SOTR Conservation in the West Poll reveals that most western voters, despite their political standing, oppose the removal of federal protections for public lands. We must lean into our shared values and fight to preserve these places.

Dark Skies Over Bears Ears

Valley of the Gods, Utah

This photo was taken late at night in the middle of the desert. Over the Fourth of July I traveled out to Southeast Utah to interview people and take some final light readings in Blanding and Monticello Utah while working for the State of the Rockies Project Dark Skies Team. The whole summer I had been trying to get a reading within the "no visible light" range. This night I was able to do so. It was so dark that my light meter didn't even work, but once I switched out my lens to a fisheye, the whole sky appeared on my camera in front of me. For me, this image represents something I had been looking for all summer. I had heard people speak about the sky in Bears Ears and why it was so worth protecting, but to see the stars for myself was something else entirely.





Granite Dells

Northern Arizona

After a day of climbing around Watson Lake, I was met with a scene to remember. Granite boulders rose from the tranquil waters, bathed in a warm, golden glow as the desert sunset painted the rock formations in hues of pink and amber. The fading light transformed the boulders into surreal sculptures, highlighting the intricate textures of the Granite Dells. The still waters mirrored the colorful sky, amplifying the unique beauty of this endangered Northern Arizona landscape. With threats of blasting for development looming, this spectacle serves as a reminder to protect and preserve the places that inspire awe and wonder.

Morning Glow

Ellingwood Peak, Colorado

The sunrise drenches Ellingwood Peak in a yellow glow, while a shadow is cast into the open air alongside the mountain. Looking over the San Luis Valley and the human life within it, we are encouraged to consider the societal values that unite us: the desire to preserve public lands. The 2025 SOTR Conservation in the West Poll reveals that most western voters, despite their political standing, oppose the removal of federal protections for public lands. As political authority looms, shadowlike, rapidly opening up the places we love for drilling and development, we must lean into our shared values and fight to preserve these places.



Still Morning

Great Sand Dunes National
Park, Colorado

Stepping out of my tent on a rainy summer morning, I was met with this breathtaking sight. The Great Sand Dunes glow in the first light of day beneath a dramatic sky. The stillness of the morning made the landscape feel almost otherworldly as the sun cast its light across the rolling dunes. Framed by wide grassy plains, scattered trees, and the looming silhouette of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, this image captures not just the raw beauty but the striking contrast of Colorado's diverse landscape.





An Early Fall

Twin Lakes, Colorado

Twin Lakes, Colorado sits at the start of independence pass. A friend from back home in Massachusetts came to visit me this fall and stated she wanted to see the aspens. It was still early October but most of the leaves had fallen at the usually spots I had been to. We packed up a lunch and drove out to Twin Lakes. We spent the day hiking and looking at the brilliant yellow across the mountain side. The health of aspen groves is closely tied to climate patterns, wildfire risks, and land management practices. As temperatures shift and droughts become more frequent, aspen populations face challenges that could alter their future distribution. Conservation efforts in places like Twin Lakes help protect these delicate ecosystems, ensuring that future generations can continue to witness the seasonal beauty of the Rockies.

Through the Looking Arches

Arches National Park, Utah

Arches National Park is a canvas of nature's artistry. The winding arches, millions of years in the making, offer a gateway between the earth and the sky, inviting visitors to step back and appreciate the contrast of reds and blues. Our planet is beautiful but fragile, and land preservation is crucial to ensure future generations can experience its wonders as we do.



A Silent Conversation with Stone

Rocky Mountains

In this quiet, peaceful moment, an unspoken connection between human and nature is revealed. It is in these moments, when we pause and admire what is around us, that we are not only observers, but part of the natural world. This beauty reminds us to preserve the Rocky Mountain West and all it represents and has to offer.



Stubborn Tree

Labyrinth Canyon, Utah

The cottonwood tree is a native species associated with river landscapes of the west and southwest. Its populations have come under pressure through the human consumption of water and competition with invasive plants like salt cedar. Here, a cottonwood tree continues to stand despite the flood-prone canyon, having grown up against a rocky wall and being blocked by a boulder, a sign that native species are meant to thrive in the challenging conditions of the Southwest. Importantly, it continues to stand without interference from salt cedar and despite the year's low water levels. The perseverance of this tree is an important reminder that protecting natural spaces also means protecting native species by controlling the spread of invasive ones. It also suggests our own water use and reminds us to be more mindful of how we use the limited resources that all life in the Southwest depends on.



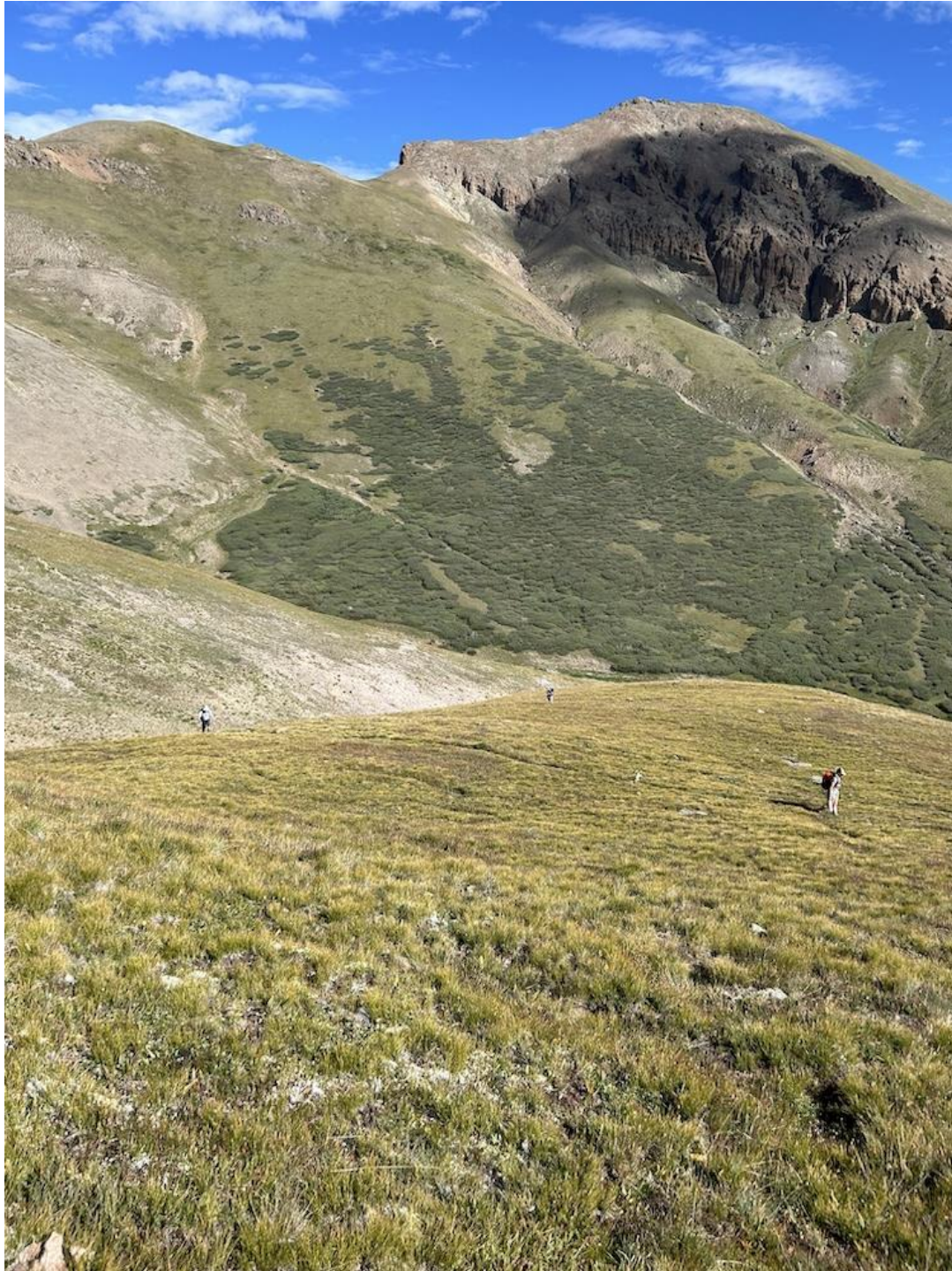
Imperfect Symmetry

Rampart Reservoir

Colorado Springs, Colorado

United by a shared root system, Aspens offer a sense of power and resilience. Though they appear as individuals, their unseen connection speaks to the silent strength found in community. Seemingly identical, their appearances are made up of an imperfect symmetry that reminds us of the subtle beauty of individuality.





Peregrination

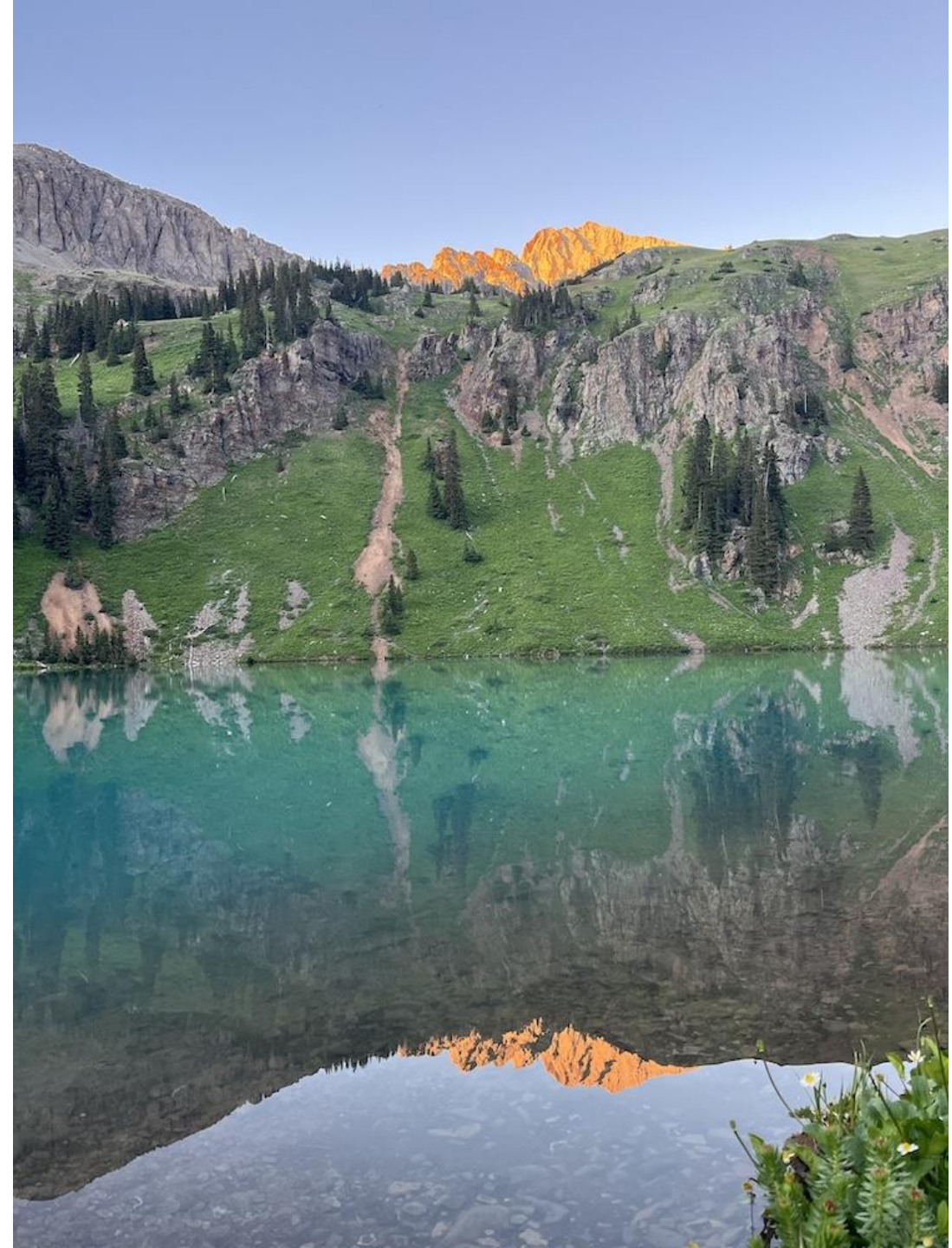
Baldy Alto Peak as seen from San Luis Peak

Oh! The privilege to meander on a bright summer day and breathe in the clean mountain air while a clear stream burbles by singing a melody rhapsodical and pure. It is truly a gift to have access to the Rocky Mountains and to live in a state that prioritizes clean living and clean forests. Nearly three quarters of Western Voters prioritize both clear air and water in addition to the opportunity to visit and recreate on national public lands. The coexisting goals of preserving the national park lands with recreating sets up a embodies the west. To explore at one's own pace while cognizant of the importance of conserving the land is always harmony between use and preservation that at the heart of the hiker. From a young age, I've been taught "Leave No Trace" and "Pack it in, Pack it out". This reflects what the Western mindset is to conserve and recreate in our public land. So, upon the next peregrination into the less traveled, appreciate both the beauty of the land and the peoples place in it.

The Beauty in Stillness

Blue Lakes, Colorado

This photo was taken on the Blue Lakes Trail, at the lowest of the three alpine lakes. At sunset, Mt. Sneffels was illuminated and reflected gracefully onto the water. Everything was so quiet, so still. There were no ripples on the water and no wind in the trees. It felt like even the birds had paused to take it all in. I experienced a tranquility here that can only come from spending time in nature, and I am so grateful to have breathed in this magical place. According to the 2025 Conservation in the West poll, over 3 in 4 voters now believe that climate change is a serious problem. This has increased from the 55% who voiced concern in 2011. As human-induced destruction continues to tear away at our world, it is becoming harder and harder to experience calm. It's now more critical than ever to protect our beautiful planet so that we can continue to experience the stillness and beauty of the nature around us.



Sunrise

Gray's Peak, Colorado

This photo was taken at the bottom of Gray's Peak trail. This photo shows the calm after the storm. We had tried to hike the mountain in September, but it began to snow, and we had to turn around all while it was in the dark. Luckily, we got to see a beautiful sunrise. This photo serves as a reminder that even in darker times, there is beauty around the corner. As people in the Rocky Mountain west are increasingly concerned with climate change, we must continue to work towards a greener future together to protect areas like this.





Down River

Green River, Utah

We take a break after hours of paddling to admire the river and all it has to offer. The tall walls and imposing silence create an unescapable awareness of one's own presence; we are only visitors admiring the land's majestic scars. What you put into nature stays there, a fact one is constantly aware of when in a canyon where water, people, and our trash have only one way to go. Rivers are easy to fall in love with, and who doesn't want to protect the things they love? Rivers like The Green are at risk throughout the Rocky Mountain West as water levels fall and pollutant content rises. The majesty of The Green and the way spending time on the river forces one to reflect is a call to protect these special places that bring us beauty, recreation, reflection, and life.



Diverse Beauty

Great Sand Dunes National Park, Colorado

Framed by grassy plains, scattered trees, and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, this scene in Great Sand Dunes National Park captures Colorado's diverse beauty. As I appreciate the magic of this moment, I am reminded to fight to help preserve these landscapes as they face threats from erosion, water scarcity, and overuse to ensure that their beauty lasts long after our presence has passed.



Admiration

This photo was taken during a long but rewarding hike by Lake Haiyaha, one of the stunning alpine lakes located in Rocky Mountain National Park. The park protects 150 lakes and 450 miles of streams, and its scenic views are admired by over 3 million people each year. As water conservation has become a major concern for Westerners, it was a special experience to enjoy this lake and take in its beautiful scenery.

Suspended in Mid-Air

Moab, Utah



This arch is located south-east of Moab on US 191. The image is an example of wild experiences in not so wild spaces. We parked our car only a couple hundred feet from the arch. As we climbed towards the top, we experienced the interplay between a very wild/surreal experience in a somewhat urban area. The ease of access contrasted sharply with the adrenaline of rappelling through the arch's center, suspended in mid-air with the desert canyon sprawling beneath us. Moments like these blur the boundaries between the built and the untamed, reminding us that awe and adventure can often be found just steps beyond the pavement.



A Peak into the Void

Pikes Peak, Colorado

A century ago, “Pikes Peak was losing its open lands faster than nearly any other comparably sized region in the nation.” - Palmer Land Conservancy

The results of this are evident to anyone who hikes Pikes Peak nowadays. Taking the Bar Trail up to the summit, you feel completely taken in by the mountain. That is, until you look behind you at the massive industrial pseudo urban sprawl that covers the eastern plains. At night, the east is lit up by city lights, and during the day, the buildings and bases are clear for all to see. But during that moment in between, just as the sun peaks over the horizon, you can’t see the sprawl at all. In that moment, all that exists is the mountain and the void. The beauty of this moment highlights how important it is that we continue to protect our public lands, that we stop encroachment onto natural spaces, and preserve the, yet unabused Rocky Mountain wilderness.



Summit

Handies Peak, Colorado

The San Juan Mountains' many colors hide in the shadows of cumulous clouds high above the summit of Handies Peak. As a person raised in Western Colorado, I've had the privilege of growing up near this vast mountain range, yet it was only on this adventure that I became aware of the many roads visible in the high alpine tundra. Off-roading is becoming extremely popular in the San Juan Mountains, especially in the Lake City area, and the many roads veined throughout the landscape remind us that our tires leave lasting tracks. Photo taken on Handies Peak, San Juan Mountains, Colorado.

Rising Rainbow

A radiant rainbow arcs across the sky, its vivid colors strikingly framed by the towering red sandstone formations of Garden of the Gods. The rocks glow warmly under the soft, serene light, and the rainbow seems to emerge right between them—like a fleeting bridge between earth and sky. Beyond its natural beauty, Garden of the Gods holds deep spiritual and cultural significance for Indigenous peoples, including the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho. These lands have long been places of ceremony and reverence. The towering formations are not just scenic—they are sacred. National monuments like this are also vital for environmental conservation, protecting ecosystems while honoring the histories and relationships Indigenous communities have with the land. Recognizing this helps us see these places not just as destinations, but as living cultural and ecological landscapes.





The Line Between

Great Sand Dunes National Park, CO

It is often hard to define the line between use and overuse in our relationship with nature. Recreating allows people to find a sense of place that creates a mindset of empathy and conservation, so spending time in nature is integral to conservation efforts. However, overuse and misuse can be complicated. While things like oil rigs and drilling have clear impacts on the environment, recreation can also be detrimental to the surrounding ecosystems. National parks and the rangers who work in them offer an example of balancing the use of wild areas. The combination of beautiful wilderness and education allows these areas to cultivate stewardship that must come with a love for the outdoors. This year, both the parks and their staff have been under attack, which not only leaves the rangers out of a job but takes away endless opportunities for recreators to become environmental stewards.

Alice Lake

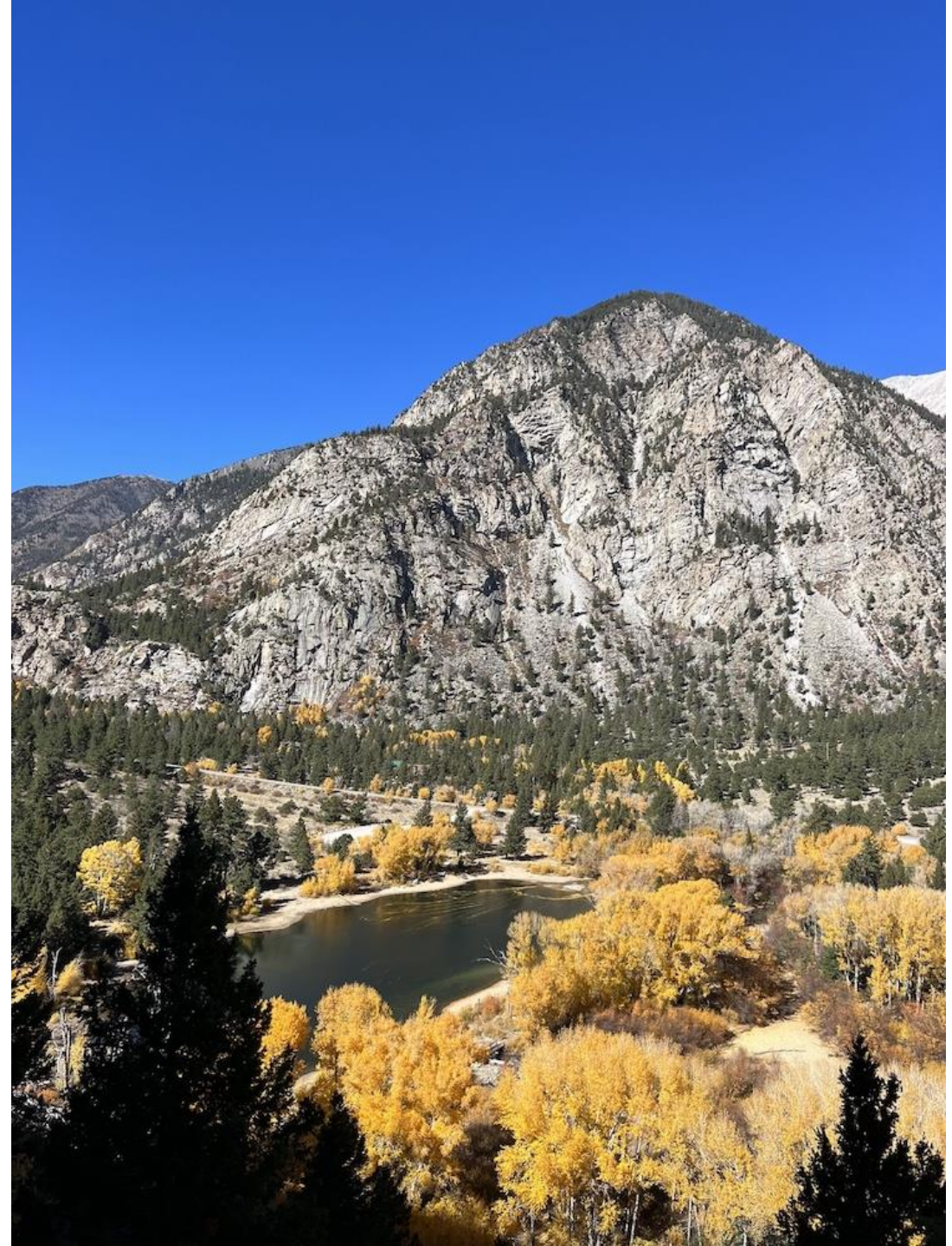
Near Stanley Lake, Idaho

A clear, warm evening in Alice Lake near Stanley, Idaho, puts the Sawtooth Mountains on a pedestal of some of the most beautiful views I have ever seen. Watching the sunset and this incredible view reinforced my gratitude for remote areas of wilderness that are becoming rarer and rarer in the United States. Photo taken at Alice Lake, Sawtooth Mountains, Idaho.



Yellow Trees

This photo depicts the Presidential Mountain Range during fall time, showing the vast array of colorful leaves. The aspens glow very yellow in late morning time, with a blue lake below that contrasts with the vibrant yellow. As we reflect upon a changing in season among the trees, it is important to remember the change currently occurring with national parks nationwide. To preserve habitats like these, we must remember to protect our public lands and parks.



Backcountry Bond

Pike-San Isabel National Forest,
Colorado

The 2025 State of the Rockies poll revealed that, for many, visiting public lands is about being together with family, bonding, and creating memories. This photo was taken on a block break trip in my first semester at CC and, although I was missing my family, this trip delivered on the bonding and creating memories. Don't get me wrong, many things went awry, mainly unexpected weather and rerouting, but being in the backcountry has a talent of cultivating connections. This photo is a reminder of amazing memories and the bond that the backcountry forges with its challenges and beauty.



A Night Divided

Queen, New Mexico

On our National Parks roadtrip we decided to stay a night by Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Swept away by the clarity of the night sky, we ventured from the warmth of the campfire to snap some shots. Although my hands were numb and my body shivering, I knew that this moment meant more than my momentary discomfort. Having never before seen a sky so clear or bright, I was awestruck, unable to tear my eyes away. The light pollution from the nearby town crept in from the bottom corner, but we were far enough away—in a nationally protected area—that we were able to witness this miraculous sight. It's moments like this that truly make me appreciate our Earth's (and galaxy's) immense natural beauty. If it were not for the protection that national lands and parks are allotted, I would never have been able to witness this. P.S. If you look closely enough you can even see an upside-down Big Dipper!



The Pass Not to be Passed By Loveland Pass, Colorado

While it is not a nationally protected area itself, Loveland Pass is part of Arapahoe National Forest. And although the pass sees far more people driving over it on I-70 than those stopping to admire the view, it is well worth the visit. Knowing this, our photography road trip allocated an hour's stop here, meticulously planning to capture the sunset. It was undoubtedly one of the coldest moments I've ever had, but hiking up and away from the road granted us a stillness unlike anything else. I truly believe that one of the best feelings in the world is feeling small, or feeling diminished within a sublime landscape, and this view gave that feeling plentifully. It is so important to remember that our world is way bigger than just us. In our modern society it is us who decides the fate of beautiful places such as this, and so we must fight to protect them with all we have. Or at the very least, take a moment to appreciate the beauty that others pass by.

