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Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park

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### Black Canyon Park Bill Wins Support

Charles Devant

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# Black Canyon park bill wins support

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By Charles Davant  
States News Service

WASHINGTON — The National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management has given preliminary support to a bill by U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell that would designate the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument near Montrose a national park.

Last week's endorsement increases the chances that Congress will approve the bill this session.

A previous version of the bill failed to win Clinton administration support when Campbell introduced it four years ago, because the park service believed the planned area was too small to be a park.

Campbell, R-Colo., got a warmer response this year because the new version would require the BLM to hand over several thousand acres to the park service.

"In our view, it would expand the boundary to include a wide enough diversity of geographic features so we can extend to it national park status," said David Barna, a park service spokesman.

Campbell's fellow Republican senator from Colorado, Wayne Allard, is a co-sponsor of the bill, and U.S. Rep. Scott McInnis, R-Glenwood Springs, intends to introduce a companion bill in the House, according to an aide.

The Black Canyon is a narrow, 1,000-foot chasm carved by the Gunnison River in west-central Colorado.

The minerals schist and gneiss give its walls a dark gray pall, and Congress and then-President Herbert Hoover made it a national monument in 1933.

Campbell's bill would authorize the Interior Department to seek private landowners' consent to buy additional land around the canyon.

The same land-use policies apply to national monuments and parks, but the nation's 54 parks tend to attract more tourists.

Park designation would not add new facilities to the area, which already includes scenic drives, hiking trails, campgrounds, a visitor center and a ranger station.

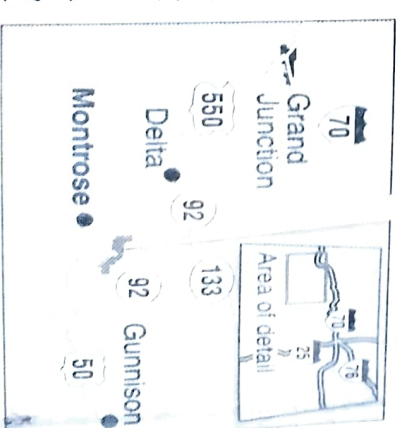
But local officials hope the more prestigious designation will boost the number of visitors above the 230,000 people who tour Black Canyon each year.

"We hope there will be an economic benefit to the community from increased business and tourism," Montrose County Administrator Earl Sires said.

"The real change is that it will get a higher profile. It's been here for years, but people will hear about a new national park and come visit it."

## Park designation sought

U.S. Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell is seeking a national park designation for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument near Montrose.



The Denver Post

National monuments. Black Canyon of the Gunnison.