



HIGH COUNTRY CONSERVATION ADVOCATES

P.O. Box 1066 • Crested Butte, CO 81224
970.349.7104 • office@hccacb.org • www.hccacb.org

June 18, 2014

Dear Representative Fischer and Members of the Interim Water Resources Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the Gunnison Basin perspective on the draft Colorado Water Plan. High Country Conservation Advocates has worked to protect the waters of our Basin for over 25 years.

Although we work hard to represent environmental interests on the Gunnison Basin Roundtable, we are only 1 seat amongst over 30 at that venue. We have made great progress with our partners in municipal and agricultural interests to find multipurpose projects in our Basin, yet environmental values and needs are still difficult to quantify and unique in the challenges they pose. For example, agricultural interests can frequently point to irrigation infrastructure fixes and upgrades or small storage projects while keeping water in a river or finding water to restore a compromised river can be more challenging.

Despite these challenges, we find tremendous support for environmental values on our rivers. In the last year, we collected over 300 comments on the water plan to Governor Hickenlooper, which we are delivering this month. Again and again, locals described these rivers as their "way of life," and referenced fishing, water quality and boating as key values worth protecting. It seems all Coloradans recognize the value of our West Slope rivers-- one visitor from Denver wrote, "taking a cold dip revives my passion for life and for this state!"

We therefore urge the Committee to consider the following priorities to address environmental interests and nonconsumptive needs in the Colorado Water Plan:

- Funding for stream management surveys and plans that will fill in the knowledge gap for nonconsumptive needs on priority stream segments.
- Funding to develop projects on these segments, where there is limited NGO capacity to bring nonconsumptive projects to the table.
- Support for augmenting instream flows (by appropriation, acquisition, leasing, and water sharing mechanisms) in cooperation with agriculture.
- Clear criteria for water development, requiring conservation, reuse, and efficiency strategies before increased diversions.

Again, thank you for coming to the Gunnison Basin to hear our perspective and consider these comments. We hope you find time to enjoy some of Colorado's most beautiful rivers during your visit.

Regards,

Jennifer S. Bock
Water Program Director