



Dolores Water Conservancy District

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April 20, 2022

Honorable Senator Michael F. Bennet
261 Russell Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

On behalf of the Dolores Water Conservancy District (DWCD), I would like to thank you and your staff for the ongoing effort to develop Dolores River National Conservation Area legislation. DWCD embarked on this effort along with the other stakeholders involved in an effort to develop a locally driven alternative to a wild and scenic river designation within the Dolores River Canyon corridor.

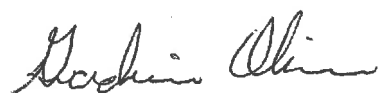
DWCD appreciates the work of Dolores, Montezuma, and San Miguel Counties, along with Wilderness Society and Dolores River Boating Advocates. From our perspective, all parties have acted with good will and candor as they advocated for their own particular interests.

DWCD joined this effort with the intent of releasing the current wild and scenic river suitability determination and reducing the challenges to Dolores River water development that might be posed by a federal reserved water right. During the pendency of these discussions the Colorado Water Conservation Board eliminated the likelihood of a federal reserved water right by obtaining an instream flow water right on the lower Dolores River which protects the same values that might have been protected by a federal withdrawal of water.

DWCD recognizes that the land management provisions of the draft bill are a significant benefit to the counties and welcomes the role established for DWCD in the draft bill for determining management direction for the water related values in a future NCA. Should the bill be introduced and pass, DWCD looks forward to continuing to work with the stakeholders.

Unfortunately, the draft bill does not, in our view, provide any relief from the current restrictions of wild and scenic suitability designation. Although DWCD supports the important land use provisions of the draft bill, because the bill would not alter the substantive provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and continues the application of Wild and Scenic Rivers Act Section 7 analysis above McPhee Dam upstream of the proposed conservation area, DWCD cannot fully endorse the draft legislation at this time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Godwin Oliver".

Godwin Oliver, President
Dolores Water Conservancy District

Cc: John Whitney, Senator Bennet Staff
Steve Garchar, Dolores County
Hilary Cooper, San Miguel County
Jim Candelaria, Montezuma County
Amber Clark, DRBA
Jeff Widen, Wilderness Society,
Steve Wolff, SWCD
Al Heaton, Rancher