



Governor Hickenlooper & Director Eklund,

Colorado's incredible outdoor legacy has been built up on the spectacular landscapes and clean waters that our state's fish and wildlife species call home. We, the undersigned sportsmen organizations, ask you to consider these values that make our state a special place in America and we urge you to protect our sporting heritage as you draft Colorado's Water Plan.

The 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey found that 2.3 million Colorado residents and nonresident visitors spent \$3.0 billion dollars in our state to hunt, fish, and view wildlife. As you know, outdoor recreation is an important driver for Colorado's economy and we appreciate that the Executive Order directing the Colorado Water Conservation Board to write Colorado's Water Plan recognizes the Plan must incorporate three core values including to maintain "a productive economy that supports ... a robust ... recreation and tourism industry" as well as "a strong environment that includes healthy watersheds, rivers and streams, and wildlife." Colorado's rivers, streams and riparian areas are necessary habitat for over 80% of Colorado's wildlife (and 100% of its fish). Maintaining these resources is critical for hunters and anglers, for the state's economy, and for our quality of life. We applaud your use of Colorado's Water Plan to find cooperative ways to protect and restore these resources, help growing urban areas meet their water needs, and sustaining our important working landscapes for agricultural production.

We see four essential components that must be included in Colorado's Water Plan:

1. Keep Colorado's rivers healthy and flowing. New water development projects should not adversely affect rivers identified for fish and wildlife values, nor let rivers run dry. In

fact, new projects should provide environmental or recreational benefits. For rivers identified with key environmental and recreational attributes, the plan must prioritize protection and restoration projects.

2. Increase water efficiency and conservation in our cities and towns. Colorado's population may double in the next 35 years. Providing water for growing communities while protecting rivers and our quality of life requires improved efficiency and conservation. CWCB studies have shown that water providers could reduce today's water use levels 35% by 2050. We can achieve this by expanding conservation incentives, increasing indoor and outdoor efficiency, and by developing and financially supporting water reuse programs.
3. Modernize agriculture and water-sharing practices. A healthy agricultural industry is vital for our communities, our state and overall economic health. Sportsmen and women appreciate that private landowners allow us to access their properties to hunt and fish. Colorado should support voluntary, compensated, flexible water-sharing agreements, between agricultural producers and growing communities while respecting existing water rights. The state plan should also provide incentives to improve infrastructure that benefit agricultural operations and healthy river flows.
4. Avoid new trans-mountain diversion projects. The historical "go to" strategy for new water supply was to pipe more West Slope water to the Front Range to satisfy new water demands to east of the Continental Divide. Beyond the projects already contemplated and underway, this strategy will not be viable in the 21st century. Trans-mountain projects are both controversial and can exacerbate problems for river and riparian health. Conservation, efficiency, alternative ag transfers and reuse are less expensive, less contentious and more effective. As our colleagues at Trout Unlimited say, "keep our rivers at home."

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. We appreciate the opportunity to engage in any dialogue with CWCB members and look forward to helping you develop a strong Colorado Water Plan.

Sincerely,

Bull Moose Sportsmen's Alliance
Colorado Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Colorado Trout Unlimited
Colorado Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership