

United States Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510

June 7, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso:

We would like to thank the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for holding a hearing in the 117th Congress to consider S. 4542, the Dolores River National Conservation Area and Special Management Area Act (“The Act”). After reintroducing the Act (now S. 636) on March 2, 2023, we respectfully request that the Committee move to consider it. An identical bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on March 10, 2023 and referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources.

The Lower Dolores Working Group (“Working Group”) and their legislative subcommittee, a group of Coloradans in the Dolores River region, worked for over a decade to carefully craft The Act. This Working Group included agricultural water users, county commissioners, ranchers, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, boating advocates, motorized recreationists, conservation interests, and private landowners – reflecting broad interests in the Dolores River’s health and future.

The Act enshrines the local compromise to remove a segment of the Dolores River from consideration as a Wild and Scenic River, and continues to recognize the Dolores River's critical contribution to the ecosystem and surrounding communities. The Act designates a National Conservation Area on lands under the Bureau of Land Management, as well as a Special Management Area on adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands. Each designation includes provisions to protect natural, scenic, cultural, and historical values, while honoring water rights, protecting agricultural and municipal water supplies, and safeguarding recreational river uses.

The bill has strong bipartisan support from the three affected counties, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, and local stakeholders. We encourage the Committee to consider this carefully vetted and broadly supported legislation to protect Colorado’s natural heritage.

Thank you for your consideration.

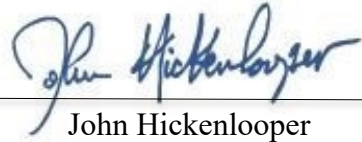
Sincerely,

United States Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator