

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Office of the Chairman

Mr. Manuel Heart
P.O. Box JJ
Towaoc, CO 81334

July 7, 2022

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

I am writing to express the support of the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe for the three county Dolores River Canyon National Conservation Area legislation, as it has been modified since the draft was released last fall.

As you know, water from the Dolores Project is a centerpiece of the Ute Mountain Ute portion of the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement. Project allocations provided, first time ever, clean drinking water for the community of Towaoc, water for the economic development that has resulted, as well as water to irrigate the 7,700 acre Ute Mountain Ute Farm and Ranch Enterprise.

The Tribe is intent on protecting our Dolores Project allocations. We believe the proposed NCA legislation supports this goal by legislatively addressing the potentially conflicting authorities of Reclamation over Dolores Project contracts and the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and BLM below McPhee Reservoir.

The legislation also protects Tribal cultural rights and practices within the NCA and provides for a Ute Mountain Ute representative on the Resource Advisory Council that will be involved in developing a Resource Management Plan for the NCA.

One area of particular interest to the Tribe are the provisions involving coordination and cooperation with the lower Dolores Native Fish Monitoring and Recommendation Team (M&R Team). The Tribe has been impacted multiple times by the Endangered Species Act, and we have learned that being well informed, collaborative and proactive with regard to potentially listed species leads to more constructive and workable outcomes. The M&R Team is broadly representative of community, conservation and agency interests thus providing an informative and collaborative context for Tribal participation.

This legislation has been in the works for many years, involving careful consideration compromise of the needs of every involved interest. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe believes that now is the time to move this legislation forward.

Sincerely,



Manuel Heart, Chairman
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe