



File Code: 2540-1

Date: March 1, 2010

Ms. Linda Bassi
Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman St.
Room 721
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Bassi:

The purpose of this letter is to provide input for the Board's consideration in appropriating instream flow rights necessary to meet Congressional intent when the Dominguez Canyon Wilderness was enacted in 2009.

While no National Forest System lands are included within the legislated National Conservation Area, there are 54,000 acres of the Uncompahgre National Forest in the watershed that contributes to flows in both Big Dominguez and Little Dominguez creeks. The Forest is interested in this effort both as a water user in the basin and as a resource management agency.

In order to provide for local management needs, water is needed for 2,314 head of permitted livestock, maintenance of our road system, one Forest Service administrative site and two developed recreation sites. The U.S. Forest Service currently has 147 locations with decreed water rights in the Dominguez watershed. The vast majority are for livestock water (15.8 AF). However, we do have domestic rights (.031 cfs) at the Cold Springs Ranger Station.

In the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) January 25, 2010 letter to CWCB, it was recommended that future non-federal water use be carved out prior to the establishment of an instream flow right through the Wilderness reaches of Big Dominguez and Little Dominguez. The U.S. Forest Service would like the same opportunity to forecast our future water needs in the area tributary to the Wilderness in order to provide for future management options. We have evaluated those future needs and have determined future water needs of 1.9 AF for stockwater and .066 cfs for domestic purposes as detailed below:

- Based upon the total number of permitted livestock, which is not likely to increase, the duration of grazing season and daily water use for a cow or horse we have calculated our total needs may be as high as 17.7 AF of annual consumptive use. This suggests a current shortfall of 1.9 AF. We have not accounted for evaporation losses at small impoundments for either current or projected needs. The specific location of those developments is yet to be determined, but would be within the Dominguez watershed.
- We have determined that any water needed for maintenance of the road system would be imported from outside of the watershed.
- There are two developed recreation sites with a potential for future water needs: the Divide Forks Campground and the Carson Hole Picnic Ground. Water is not currently being provided at either of these sites, but it might be desirable to do so in the future. It is



possible that those sites would be expanded or relocated at some future date to better provide for public recreation demands. Based upon typical design and capacity considerations, future use is estimated to be 15 gpm per site or .033 cfs.

Staff of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests has reviewed the technical report submitted by the BLM. We endorse their recommendation and rationale on flow protection needs. Their approach incorporates periodic flood events both snowmelt driven and thunderstorm driven which is critical to the continued functionality of these natural systems and the flow dependant ecosystems they support. Our experience with flow regimes on the Uncompahgre Plateau would reinforce the BLM conclusions. We believe this is a very credible investigation and is well supported by the science. Delivery of water to the upper terminus of each reach will also provide protection for both aquatic and riparian values on the Forest, which is consistent with both agency policy and local management plans.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sherry Hazelhurst
SHERRY HAZELHURST
Deputy Forest Supervisor