



PO Box 5074  
Englewood, CO 80155-4315

January 19, 2011

Mr. Robert J. White  
Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area (AHRA)  
307 W. Sackett Ave.  
Salida, CO 81201

*Re: Helena Diversion Structure/BV Boat Chute Improvement Project*

Dear Mr. White:

I write this letter on behalf of the Colorado Whitewater Association (CW), a non-profit organization that promotes and encourages participation in the sport of whitewater kayaking throughout the State of Colorado. There currently are 600 members of CW and many visit the Arkansas River Valley to enjoy boating, camping, fishing, mountain biking, hiking, and other sports the area has to offer.

CW enthusiastically supports your efforts to improve the Helena Diversion Structure/BV Boat Chute on the river south of the town of Buena Vista. As the grant application states, this structure is considered a rapid to be run on this section of river. Over the years, the boulders and concrete that make up this structure have shifted due to water pressures and have created an unpredictable, dangerous situation that has contributed to a death on the river.

The diversion dam, which feeds water into a ditch on river left, is an abrupt, steep, manmade structure. Usually, this rapid is run based upon past experience of parties within the group. As it is approached, one sees only a horizon line. Rafters must stand on their seats to attempt to see the crux of the rapid. The usual strategy is to start at a specific spot at the top and let the boat run on its own as there is little time or space for adjustment. One hopes that nothing has changed since the last time it was run. At certain flows, this drop is fast with large exposed boulders and large hydraulic holes and waves.

The reference "Arkansas River Guide," by Thomas G. Rampton describes this drop as follows: "There is a boat chute on the right, but it has rocks and a crusher wave at the bottom. Joe said most guides go left, but the chute (right) might be better below 1000 cfs. You'll want the bow pointed a little left (toward river center) to meet the wave, which almost flipped me a couple seasons ago, and cost me an oar." The book was published in 1996 and includes a photograph of the diversion structure at high and low water flows at that time. We know the boulders have moved since then.

Thank you for supporting Colorado Whitewater Association,  
a 501c3 non profit organization.  
See our website at [www.coloradowhitewater.org](http://www.coloradowhitewater.org)

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Until recently, some boaters would criminally trespass on private land to either side of the river to scout or portage this structure. They considered their safety far more important than a charge of criminal trespass. This past fall, AHRA acquired access to and constructed a scouting and portage trail to provide a legal, safer option to boaters at this site. We commend AHRA for providing this option. However, we feel that this does not eliminate a dangerous manmade situation on the river that should be resolved.

CW membership is excited to see this diversion dam improved. The Buena Vista Whitewater Park lies above this structure and some busy, fun, class II white water runs below to Johnson's Village. If improved, the boater's experience on this section of river could be greatly enhanced with the addition of a safer rapid or surf wave.

Respectfully submitted,

COLORADO WHITEWATER  
ASSOCIATION

By:  
Name: Scott Winkleman  
Title: President