



August 25, 2014 (sent electronically)

Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman Street, Room 721
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Members of the Board,

We are writing to ask the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) to accept an interest in the McKinley Ditch in Gunnison and Montrose Counties for instream flow use from the Colorado Water Trust. This voluntary, market-based project will allow the shared use of that water for both irrigation and to restore flows to the Little Cimarron River.

Western Resource Advocates has worked on a wide range of efforts to protect and restore river health and promote sustainable water use in Colorado for the past 15 years. We have partnered closely with the CWCB on many of these efforts and appreciate the Board's growing interest in finding solutions that help protect the state's valuable water resources.

The benefit from the McKinley Ditch water right above would be substantial: the CWCB holds an instream flow water right upstream of the McKinley headgate and a second right downstream on the Cimarron River. The Little Cimarron is almost completely dry below the McKinley headgate, even in years when water is relatively plentiful. Obtaining this right for the instream flow program would be a "win" on many levels. It will help re-water a dry portion of the stream, connect two existing instream flow water rights, preserve and improve the natural environment, and help maintain the agricultural heritage of the area.

Right now the CWCB is much engaged in a statewide effort to develop the Colorado Water Plan and, in so doing, refining tools to meet the needs of growth, agriculture, and the environment. We believe this transaction meets state-wide goals: it recognizes the values of irrigated agriculture and the environment and provides a groundbreaking model that could serve future agriculture and conservation partnerships in Colorado. Currently there are few tools that can serve these purposes. Thus, we urge your support for this one.

Sincerely,

Bart P. Miller
Water Program Director

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