

July 13, 2016

Craig Godbout - WSRA Application
Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman St., Room 721
Denver, CO 80203
Craig.godbout@state.co.us

Re: WSRA Application for SLV Trout Unlimited Chapter – ‘SLV Wetland and Wildlife Assessment’

Dear Mr. Godbout:

On behalf of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable (Roundtable), please accept this letter of support for the San Luis Valley Wetland and Wildlife Assessment (Assessment) sponsored by the San Luis Valley Trout Unlimited Chapter. The Water Supply Reserve Account Application for the Assessment was evaluated by the Roundtable and was approved by voting members at the June 14, 2016 Roundtable meeting. The Assessment received support from all of the Roundtable members and therefore supports this project's application for WSRA funding.

The Roundtable recognizes that the Assessment will be a valuable tool that will inform future conservation decision-making and project development in the Rio Grande Basin on public lands and potentially private lands seeking conservation easements or enhancement projects. The Assessment will document changes in wetland and riparian extent across the San Luis Valley (SLV), provide goals and priorities for natural resource agencies, produce factsheets and threat matrices for 35 pre-determined priority species, develop a prioritization tool for agencies and other conservation organizations, identify how collaborative efforts among agencies may work in the future to meet water needs, recommend future water and wetland delivery projects, and may be a template for other basins to work cooperatively together to meet resource needs. The Assessment and prioritized projects will meet the following Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan Goals (RGBIP):

1. Protect, preserve, and/or restore the sustainability of the Rio Grande Basin watersheds by focusing on watershed health and ecosystem function.
2. Protect and preserve the doctrine of prior appropriation and vested water rights, and fully utilize Colorado's compact entitlements as specified under the Rio Grande and Costilla Creek Compacts.
3. Sustain the confined and unconfined aquifers in accordance with Senate Bill 04-222 and operate within the State Engineer's new Rules and Regulations for the SLV.
4. Operate, maintain, rehabilitate, and create necessary infrastructure to meet the Basin's long-term water needs, including storage.
6. Support the development of projects and methods that have multiple benefits for

- agricultural, municipal and industrial, and environmental and recreational water needs.
10. Promote water management and administrative practices that are adaptive, flexible, and responsive to optimize multiple benefits.
 11. Protect, preserve, and enhance terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitats throughout the basin.
 12. Conserve, restore, and maintain wetlands and riparian areas for the benefit of a healthy watershed.
 13. Work to sustain active river flows throughout the year in cooperation with water users and administrators to restore and sustain ecological function of the rivers and floodplain habitats within the context of existing water rights and compact obligations.
 14. Maintain and enhance water dependent recreational activities.

In addition to meeting many of the RGBIP goals, the Assessment aligns with Colorado Statute 37-75-104 (2)(c) as it relates to 'develop[ing] a basin-wide non-consumptive water supply needs assessment, [will] propose projects or methods, both structural and nonstructural,...seeks the input and advice of affected local governments, water providers, and other interested stakeholders and persons in establishing its needs assessment, and shall propose projects or methods for meeting those needs.'

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "N. Coombs".

Nathan Coombs, Chair
Rio Grande Basin Roundtable