

Rio Grande Basin Roundtable  
623 Fourth Street  
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July 17, 2017

Becky Mitchell and CWCB Board of Directors  
Colorado Water Conservation Board  
1313 Sherman St., Room 721  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: WSRA Application for the Upper Rio Grande Assessment

Dear Ms. Mitchell,

On behalf of the Rio Grande Basin Roundtable (Roundtable), please accept this letter of support for the Five Ditches: Rio Grande Diversion and Headgate Improvement Project sponsored by the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation (CRGRF). The Water Supply Reserve Account Application for the Five Ditches Project was evaluated by the Roundtable and was unanimously approved by voting members at the July 11, 2017 Roundtable meeting, with one member abstaining as he sits on a ditch board which is receiving assistance through this project.

The Roundtable recognizes that the RGSWA Design Project addresses both agricultural and environmental, recreation, and water administration needs facing the Rio Grande Basin. The Project will result in the replacement of aging diversions and headgates for the Rio Grande Ditch #2, Consolidated Ditch, Pace Ditch, San Luis Valley Canal, and Centennial Ditch. The Project will benefit each ditch company by improving diversion efficiency and reducing maintenance. Cumulatively, the Five Ditches Project will benefit 143 individual shareholders who divert a total of over 85,000 AF and irrigate 35,906 acres. In addition, the implementation of these improvements will be paired with streambank stabilization and riparian restoration, which will improve river health, water quality, and wildlife habitat. The Five Ditches Project meets the following Rio Grande Basin Implementation Plan Goals:

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.
4. Operate, maintain, rehabilitate, and create necessary infrastructure to meet the Basin's long-term water needs including storage.
5. Manage water use to sustain optimal agricultural economy throughout the Basin's communities.
6. Support the development of projects and methods that have multiple benefits for agricultural, municipal and industrial, and environmental and recreational water needs.

7. Meet new demands for water, to the extent practicable, without impacting existing water rights and compact obligations.
9. Make progress towards meeting applicable water quality standards throughout the Basin.
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.
14. Maintain and enhance water dependent recreational activities.

In addition to meeting many of the BIP goals, this project aligns the Colorado Water Plan's policy to identify and implement projects to meet community and agricultural water needs, while balance the needs of the environment, and recreation.

Thank you for your consideration of this application.

Sincerely,

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

Nathan Coombs  
Chair, Rio Grande Basin Roundtable