



RUEDI WATER & POWER AUTHORITY

Jessica Brody, Chair
Colorado Water Conservation Board
1313 Sherman Street
Room 718
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Brody,

I am writing to express Ruedi Water and Power Authority's (RWAPA) support for the lease of Ruedi Reservoir water for winter instream flow use on the Fryingpan River and 15-Mile Reach of the Colorado River.

RWAPA is a regional water agency in the Roaring Fork Watershed, directed by a Board with an elected official from each local government within the watershed – Aspen, Snowmass Village, Basalt, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, Pitkin and Eagle Counties. Our mission is to mobilize resources and influence to protect and enhance the waters and communities of the Roaring Fork Watershed.

The Fryingpan River is an extremely valuable resource for our communities because of its natural beauty, rich environment, and recreational opportunities. In 1979, the lower Fryingpan River became the first recognized "Gold Medal" trout stream in the state and in 2015 it was determined to generate nearly \$4 million in local economic value annually. Water released from Ruedi Reservoir influences the quality of the instream and riparian habitat of this river. Low flows, especially in winter, can contribute to the formation of anchor ice and compromise the quality of trout habitat, resulting in environmental and economic impacts to the area.

In the last two years, the CWCB, in collaboration with Roaring Fork Conservancy, have entered a contract with the Colorado River District using water stored in Ruedi Reservoir for the primary purpose of enhancing the instream flow in the Fryingpan below Ruedi Reservoir between January 1 and March 31 to prevent anchor ice formation by increasing the flows from the 39 cfs decreed instream flow to flows of approximately 55 – 80 cfs. Anecdotally, anchor ice formed in December of 2018 and December of 2019 in the lower Fryingpan and nearby in the Roaring Fork River. When the additional releases began in January of both of those years, the anchor ice in the Fryingpan slowly melted and no other formation or damage was observed. However, anchor ice nearby in the Roaring Fork River, regularly broke apart, ripped river bottom, and reformed throughout that winter, potentially damaging the macroinvertebrate populations of the riverbed.

Additionally, these increases in flow increase the efficiency of hydropower production at the City of Aspen's hydropower plant (located at the base of Ruedi Reservoir), which cannot operate when flows are less than approximately 50 cfs.

RWAPA greatly appreciated the efforts and expenses of the state in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. And, upon seeing the success of this operation achieved and preparing for another low base flow in the Fryingpan this winter, RWAPA encourages the CWCB to support this lease to enhance flows and protect the environment of the Fryingpan River again this year.

Sincerely,

April Long, Executive Director
Ruedi Water and Power Authority

