

Ms. Leanne Veldhuis
District Ranger
Holy Cross Ranger District
White River National Forest

June 29, 2020

Ms. Veldhuis:

I am writing to oppose the exploratory drilling as part of a special use permit for the Colorado cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs. This is the first step in a process to construct a dam and storage reservoir which would encroach on the Holy Cross Wilderness in Eagle County. This would be the first step in trying to establish the reservoir. Removal of one acre, let alone 500 acres (Vail Daily, June 29, 2020, page 3) of wilderness must be denied immediately. Once encroached upon, it can never be regained as Wilderness.

This is just another attempt by Aurora and Colorado Springs to divert water from the western slope to the front range. In 1982, following significant court battles, involving the county commissioners, the Forest Service, and the Holy Cross Wilderness Defense Fund, we thought this issue had been put to bed once and for all. It is wilderness, not to be encroached upon, ever, by law.

The separation of an exploratory drilling permit from the actual permit for a reservoir is a shoddy attempt to begin the dam project. They must not be separated. It is part of the eventual goal of building a dam. It would also destroy 10,000 year old fens. There is also a very valuable geologic phenomenon that brings out of state scientists to study because of it's rarity. The riparian area would also be affected significantly. This is going on a 40 year effort by Aurora and Colorado Springs to gain additional water from the Homestake area. It has been denied. Separation of the exploratory drilling permit from the dam permit must be recognized for what it is, the eventual goal of a permit for a dam and reservoir.

I realize it is hard for an incoming District Ranger to have a feel for the local community and the history that has occurred around this issue. I urge you to investigate that history. Dr. Warren Hern is still a practicing physician, and has already written a letter concerning this to you. His contact number is . He was instrumental in the 1982 effort, and probably has the most history concerning this issue.

You are starting off on an adventure here, and I would like to welcome you to the community, and realize you have a "full plate" of issues with Homestake, Berliamont, and Booth Heights, and issues with Vail Resorts, all creating spirited viewpoints within the community, with much of it landing on

your desk. Good luck and hopefully have fun.



Best Regards, Walt Olsen