



Water Supply & Demand
26791 E. Quincy Ave.
Aurora, CO 80016

AuroraGov.org

December 4, 2024

United States Forest Service
Pike-San Isabel National Forests &
Cimarron and Comanche National
Grasslands (PSICC)
Supervisor's Office
2840 Kachina Drive
Pueblo, CO 81008

Dear PSICC Forest Supervisor,

Aurora Water is pleased to provide this letter of support for the draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Lower North-South Vegetation Management Project on the Pike National Forest.

The project addresses the need to reduce high fuel loads and improve forest health while protecting critical water infrastructure and nearby communities. The EA analyzes tree thinning, prescribed burning, and/or other fuel reduction methods on up to 116,600 acres of the 261,096-acre project area.

This project directly supports Aurora Water's work protecting Aurora's watersheds to ensure high water quality and protect critical infrastructure. Source water protection involves proactively implementing watershed health projects such as forest thinning, fuel reduction, as well as post-wildfire mitigation in forested areas, and sediment reduction projects in burned areas to prevent or mitigate impacts of wildfire on Aurora Water infrastructure.

Aurora Water's Source Water Protection Plan includes analysis tools to prioritize projects. The Upper South Platte Watershed stands out as Aurora Water's highest priority watershed for protection based on wildfire risk factors and the presence of Aurora Water infrastructure. This is not only a priority watershed for Aurora Water, but also for Denver Water and the entire Denver metropolitan area. Approximately 80% of the Denver metro area's water passes through Strontia Springs Reservoir.

Although a small reservoir, Strontia Springs serves nearly 2 million people through Denver Water and Aurora Water treatment facilities. Sediment from the Buffalo Creek and Hayman Fires resulted in significant sediment deposition in Strontia Springs Reservoir. This sediment decreases storage capacity and threatens critical infrastructure. Fuel reduction work decreases the amount of sediment runoff into reservoirs.

Aurora Water supports increasing the pace and scale of forest treatments for fuel reduction. We provide funding to these efforts through collection agreements with the US Forest Service, Colorado State Forest Service, forest collaboratives, and non-profit partners.

Aurora Water strongly supports the US Forest Service's draft environmental assessment (EA) for the Lower North-South Vegetation Management Project on the Pike National Forest. Aurora Water is



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committed to forest management and fuel reduction in critical supply watersheds. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at rvidmar@auroragov.org.

Sincerely,

Richard Vidmar

Richard A. Vidmar, P.E.
Water Resources Manager, Integrated Basin and Ecosystem Services
Aurora Water

EC: Matt Ashley, Water Resource Specialist II, Aurora Water, mtashley@auroragov.org