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First name: Margaret

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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I strongly oppose the requested special use permit (SUP) and related Categorical Exclusion (CE) for geotechnical investigations in connection with Homestake Partners' proposed transmountain diversion of water from Homestake Creek in the Holy Cross Wilderness for the Whitney Reservoir project.

I oppose both the SUP/CE and the underlying proposed Whitney Reservoir project.

The use of Water in Colorado Springs and Aurora is part of a much larger water problem throughout Colorado, and should not be prioritized over the Wilderness Area without full public consideration of alternatives such as reducing water use.

The requested SUP/CE would allow for up to a year of drilling, road construction and cross-country travel by vehicles and equipment within the White River National Forest in support of the proposed reservoir and diversion project. This would cause significant damage to an ecologically unique and sensitive area, popular for outdoor recreation. I use this area myself, and I value the wilderness designation.

The proposed work also is a critical step in advancing the Whitney Reservoir project, which would require making a Wilderness boundary "adjustment" to reduce the Holy Cross Wilderness by almost 500 acres. I oppose reduction of any federal Wilderness Areas, and especially the unique Holy Cross Wilderness which is already being dewatered by the Homestake Partners.

I am deeply concerned about the Whitney Reservoir project's impact on the environment and the complex fen wetlands. These wetlands are some of the finest of their type in the entire White River National Forest. Reclamation and restoration of complex fen wetlands has not been proven to be possible. We should be saving these ecological areas wherever we find them, not destroying them for distant water users.