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First name: Kerry

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Organization: State of Colorado

Title: Senator

Comments: Marcia Gilles, Acting District Ranger

White River National Forest

PO Box 190, Minturn, CO 81645

Dear Acting District Ranger Gilles,

The geotechnical investigation on Whitney Creek is a preliminary step to build a reservoir in Homestake Valley. I, on behalf of the seven counties I represent, oppose this larger project, which would destroy wetlands, high altitude fens, would eventually remove nearly 500 acres from the Holy Cross Wilderness, and would significantly deplete the Eagle River watershed. Individually, each item listed would be grounds to not proceed but together it is unfathomable that the Forest Service would proceed with this investigation.

Wilderness areas are, by definition, citizen lead initiatives. To dishonor their work by proceeding with this process is not in line with the Forest Service mission nor the boots-on-the-ground mentality of the Rangers across the White River National Forest area.

Additionally, there is strong bipartisan support across the Western Slope, and upper basin counties, to prevent any additional water divisions. With drought conditions becoming the new normal, Lower Basin States meeting to determine how the Colorado River Basin can be managed in their favor, and buy-and-dry practices gaining momentum across the Western Slope, it is imperative we protect high altitude water resources and keep each drop in the basin it was born in.

I cannot express how sternly the citizens of my district oppose water diversion projects to front range communities. And of course, the history around Homestake water division projects should not be ignored. Now and in the future, this type of action brings people together in opposition.

Our Wilderness areas are afforded the highest level of protection and to begin action that disturbs them today, begins a process of destroying them forever, and disrespects the citizen lead efforts of the past is undemocratic and disregards the majority opinion of people across Colorado. Proceeding with this investigation is an affront to the Keep it Public movement.

I, on behalf of the people of Senate District 5, strongly urge you not to categorically exclude this project from NEPA analysis.

Respectfully,

Kerry Donovan
State Senator
Senate District 5