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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I strongly oppose the requested special use permit (SUP) and related Categorical Exclusion (CatEx) 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 became familiar with this unique valley beginning in 1984 and have enjoyed it as a year round camper, backpacker, hiker, fisherman, Homestake Valley homeowner and as a parent sharing this spectacular, yet accessible valley with my children. There are precious few of these places left. As streams have lower and lower flows and earlier runoffs it is critical that water stays in its basin of origin and not be removed from its natural drainage. Homestake Valley cannot afford any more water depletion.

I am deeply concerned about the Whitney Reservoir (Homestake III) project's impact on the environment and the complex fens. These wetlands are some of the finest of their type in the entire White River National Forest. Being a Homestake Valley homeowner, I have closely experienced the return of moose to the valley and thriving herd growth. The moose herd, from my recent year round observations is at nine or so. Drilling and high decibel sound testing will have a detrimental effect on the herd as will dam construction and destruction of the fen ecosystem.

I am a professional engineer licensed in 20+ states and have reviewed the preliminary dam and pipeline plans presented to me by the Aurora / Colorado Springs planning group last July. Here are my observations and objections: should the Whitney Reservoir project go forward, a dam will be built destroying the fen ecosystem. Additionally, per their preliminary plan, a massive pipeline through the valley to the Homestake I reservoir and 50,000 horsepower (HP) pump station would be built. The 50,000 HP pump station will require power transmission lines brought into the valley to power the pumps. This will be basically an industrial plant in the heart of the Homestake Valley. The noise from the 50,000 HP pumps will be heard throughout the valley destroying the habitat for wildlife and humans alike.

Also, I object to the reduction of any Federal Wilderness Areas, and especially the unique Holy Cross Wilderness which is already being dewatered by the Homestake Partners.

Front Range cities must adapt to their natural environment, not destroy others. Any exploration process is a huge impact on the environment. Do not allow step one of the destructions of this special valley. They do not need to explore for the best location for a dam when the dam should not be allowed. Just because the developers changed the name to Whitney Reservoir Project makes it no different than previously defeated Homestake II efforts.

There are many other alternatives such as water conservation. Water conservation can be easily attained by raising Aurora and Colorado Springs water consumption rates. Doubling or tripling the users' water utility bill will bring a dramatic reduction in their water use. If water capture and storage are deemed necessary, consider projects where the pristine nature of the valley has already been destroyed by man. One close by example is the Camp Hale site ecologically devastated in 1942 for the WWII effort. In my opinion, creating a Camp Hale reservoir would have fewer environmental impacts.