

JOHN HICKENLOOPER
COLORADO

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
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SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0611

WASHINGTON, DC
374 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5841

COLORADO
BYRON ROGERS FEDERAL BUILDING
1981 STOUT STREET
SUITE 12-300
DENVER, CO 80284
(303) 244-1628
<http://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov>

October 8, 2024

The Honorable Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton,

We write in support of the application submitted by the Southwestern Water Conservation District (SWCD), on behalf of the Water Conservation and Infrastructure Partnership (Partnership), to the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Basin Environmental Drought Mitigation Program (B2E). If awarded, B2E funding will support critical ecosystem and habitat restoration projects across six subbasins, addressing drought-related issues and providing cost-effective long-term environmental, ecosystem, and habitat benefits.

SWCD's geographic scope covers all or part of nine counties in Southwest Colorado, including the Dolores and San Juan River Basins, while bordering three states and four tribal nations. Nearly all of the SWCD waterways border or directly pass through disadvantaged communities.

The Partnership, a collaborative of over 30 entities in Southwest Colorado, aims to increase regional capacity by implementing a community navigator and bundling partner projects to access the current unprecedented funding opportunities. The Partnership's B2E proposal includes multi-benefit projects for bank stabilization, invasive species removal, riparian area restoration, fish passage and habitat connectivity, erosion control, and fen and wetland restoration. These projects were selected based on their impact, feasibility and readiness, and level of community engagement in the region. Through practical, community-led restoration efforts, these projects will strengthen the drought resilience and ecological health of the region.

We encourage you to give the application submitted by the Southwestern Water Conservation District your full and fair consideration consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. Thank you for your review, and please notify our offices of any funds awarded.

Sincerely,



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator