



## WATER QUALITY / QUANTITY COMMITTEE (QQ)

P.O. Box 2308 • Silverthorne, Colorado 80498  
970-468-0295 • Fax 970-468-1208 • email: qqwater@nwccog.org

May 1, 2016

Dear Governor John Hickenlooper,

Your leadership in writing Colorado's first ever Water Plan is an important step forward for Colorado on future water management. We commend your "start with conservation" approach to solving Colorado's water challenges and look to you as a regional leader on drought. We encourage you to continue your leadership by pushing for additional coordination among federal agencies on drought programs in the Colorado River Basin.

The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments Water Quality/ Quantity Committee (QQ) is made up of elected officials from local governments in the headwaters of the Gunnison, Colorado, South Platte, and Yampa Basins who've worked together since the 70s on issues relating to land use authority, environmental protection and economic development. We are joined in this letter by local government leaders from around Colorado who share these interests.

The value the Colorado River provides to the Southwest is staggering. The river system supplies drinking water for 40 million people, irrigates 5 million acres of land that grows 15 percent of our nation's crops, and serves as a major economic powerhouse fueling economies in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. As revealed in the Department of the Interior's (DOI) comprehensive 2012 Colorado River Basin Water Supply & Demand Study, demand for the river's water now exceeds supply.

As the severity of the drought grows throughout the West, federal agencies offer an array of programs offering partial solutions. Both the Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) offer programs supporting measures that increase efficiency of water use and assist in drought response. However, these programs are not currently coordinated efficiently. For example, the grants for BOR's WaterSMART and NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program are awarded on entirely different schedules, making it more cumbersome and slower than it needs to be.

A federal Colorado River strategy to better coordinate these programs can produce greater efficiencies and better programs to benefit Coloradoans, including farmers and ranchers. Leveraging resources from several agencies would maximize the effectiveness of the program and establish a long-term framework for improved water management in Colorado River Basin states, including Colorado. This type of coordinated effort would also help to expedite the resources to reach projects on the ground quicker.

We know that collaboration works. DOI and NRCS recently collaborated with state and local leaders like you to create Greater Sage-Grouse conservation plans that use the resources of both agencies to conserve habitat for the species and avoid the necessity of an endangered species listing.

We commend the White House for their recent Presidential Federal Drought Action Plan which will increase on-the-ground coordination among federal agencies to better utilize their resources to combat the drought and protect vital water resources. This is the first step in knocking down a major barrier to protecting the Colorado River, the headwaters and its tributaries.

As the architect of the region's most recent and collaborative water plan, you are uniquely qualified to send a letter to DOI and USDA requesting that they launch their coordination effort in the Colorado River Basin as soon as possible. Additionally, please request that local and state partners be at the table. With climate change forecasted to reduce flow in the Colorado River by 10 to 30 percent by 2050 we cannot afford to postpone federal program coordination. Thank you for your consideration and leadership for Colorado.



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May 1, 2016

Dear Senator Michael Bennet,

As leader on the Senate Agriculture committee and on farm bill conservation programs, we thank you for being an ardent supporter of conservation programs that have helped keep Colorado productive while also conserving wildlife habitat. As local elected officials from across Colorado, we appreciate all that you have done to enhance programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and encourage you to push for additional coordination among federal agencies on drought programs in the Colorado River Basin.

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In order to make this a reality, we urge you to send a letter to DOI and USDA requesting that they launch their coordination effort in the Colorado River Basin as soon as possible. Additionally, please request that local and state partners be at the table. With climate change forecasted to reduce flow in the Colorado River by 10 to 30 percent by 2050 we cannot afford to postpone federal program coordination. Thank you for your consideration and leadership for Colorado.

Sincerely,

**From:** Frank Kugel

**Sent:** Thursday, April 21, 2016 9:15 AM

**To:** 'Mark Achen' <[machen@cityofgunnison-co.gov](mailto:machen@cityofgunnison-co.gov)>

**Cc:** Ken Bradford <[tex@cityofgunnison-co.gov](mailto:tex@cityofgunnison-co.gov)>; Bob Drexel <[BDrexel@cityofgunnison-co.gov](mailto:BDrexel@cityofgunnison-co.gov)>;

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Ferguson <[sferguson@cityofgunnison-co.gov](mailto:sferguson@cityofgunnison-co.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: Water letters to Hickenlooper and Bennet

Hi Mark,

The UGRWCD has yet to formally consider this issue, but will likely do so at our Board meeting next Monday evening. In the meantime, my personal/professional opinion is that the City sign on to the letters. Our representatives should urge the Federal government to view the Colorado River as a high priority issue.

I would be happy to present to Council whenever you deem it appropriate. Thanks for the opportunity to weigh in.

*Frank Kugel*

*General Manager, UGRWCD*

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